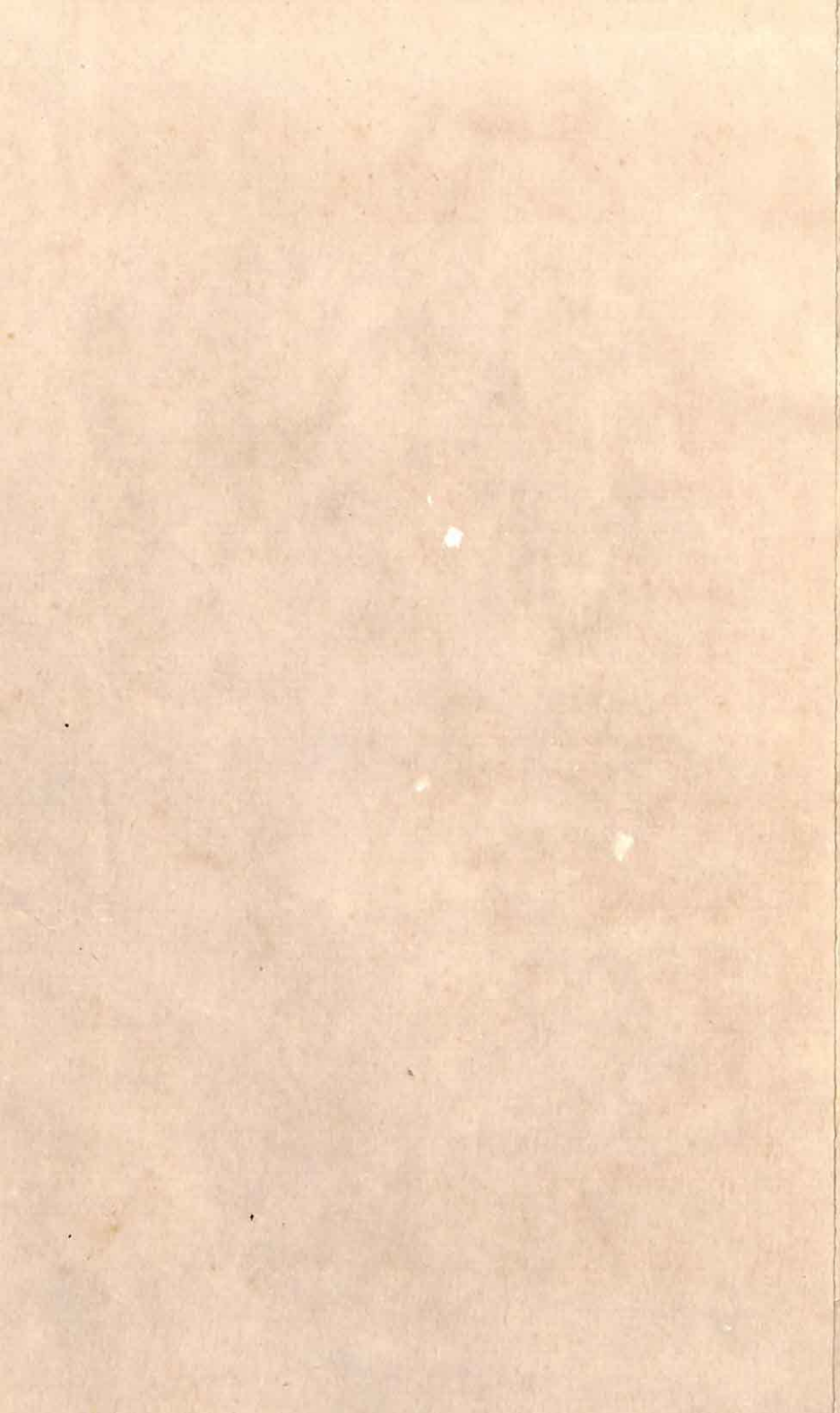


A SHORT HISTORY OF AKBAR THE GREAT

Dr. A. L. SRIVASTAVA

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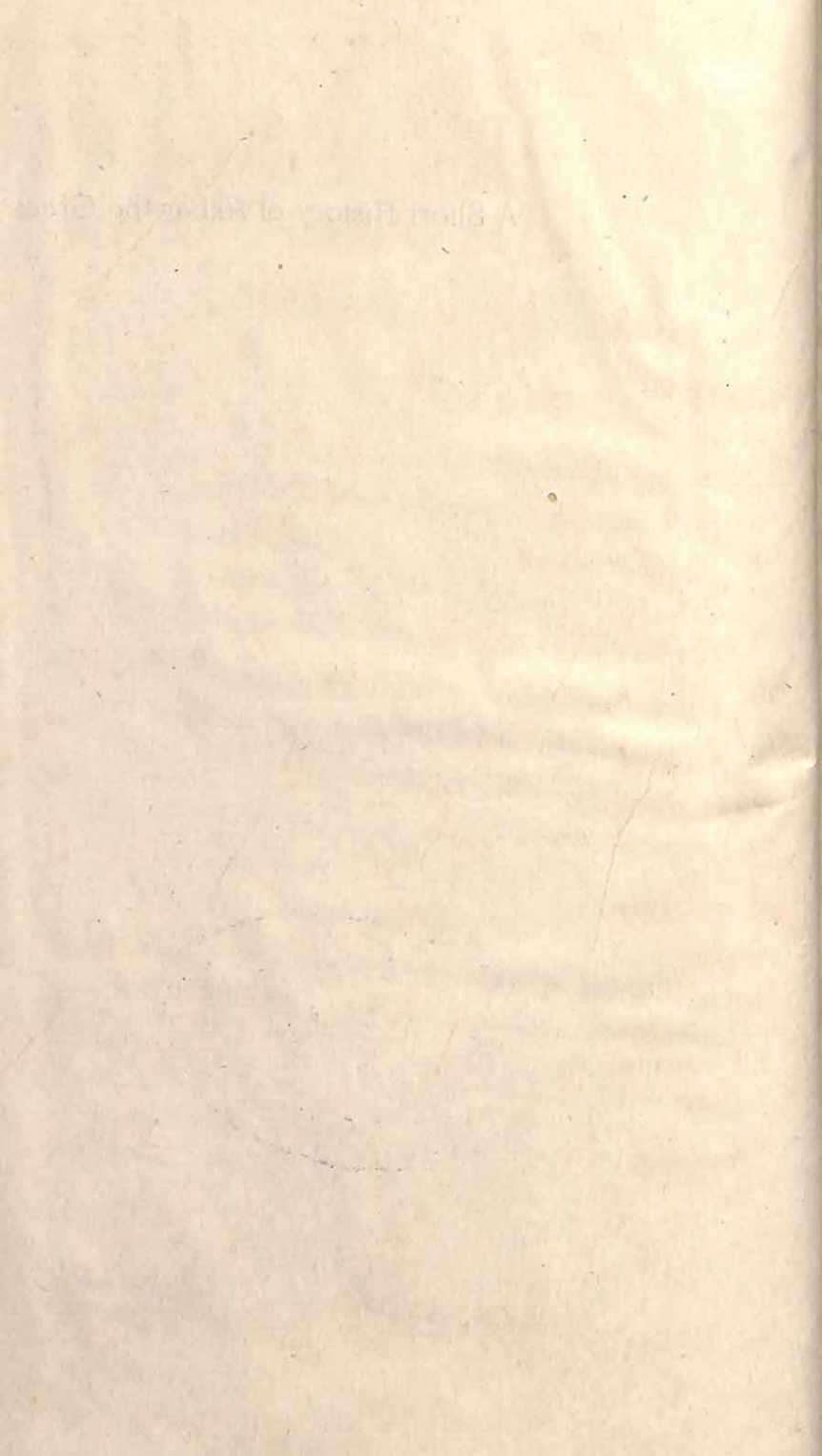


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(1542—1605 A. D.)

by

A. L. SRIVASTAVA

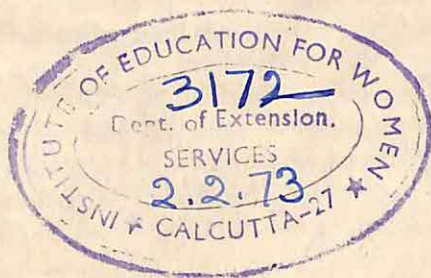
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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

In this edition the book has been revised, and a few errors of the second edition have been corrected. Some new matter has also been added to make it up-to-date.

January 26, 1965

A. L. SRIVASTAVA

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This short history of the reign of the greatest Mughal Emperor of India and one of the greatest rulers in human history is the result of the author's long study of contemporary sources in Persian and other languages and embodies his experience as a teacher of the subject for a quarter of a century. It gives in a short compass almost everything that a serious student of history should know about this great monarch. Historical research in Indian history in general and medieval Indian history in particular has made great advance since the publication of the historian V. A. Smith's *Akbar the Great Mogul* in 1917. A revision of the life-story and achievements of Akbar has thus become imperative. The present author has undertaken the difficult task of writing an authoritative history of Akbar's reign in three volumes—a work likely to take ten years to complete it. This small book may be considered to be a summary of the author's views on the subject. It is hoped that it will prove useful to the general reader and the serious student alike.

Agra College,
Agra
7th November, 1956

A. L. SRIVASTAVA

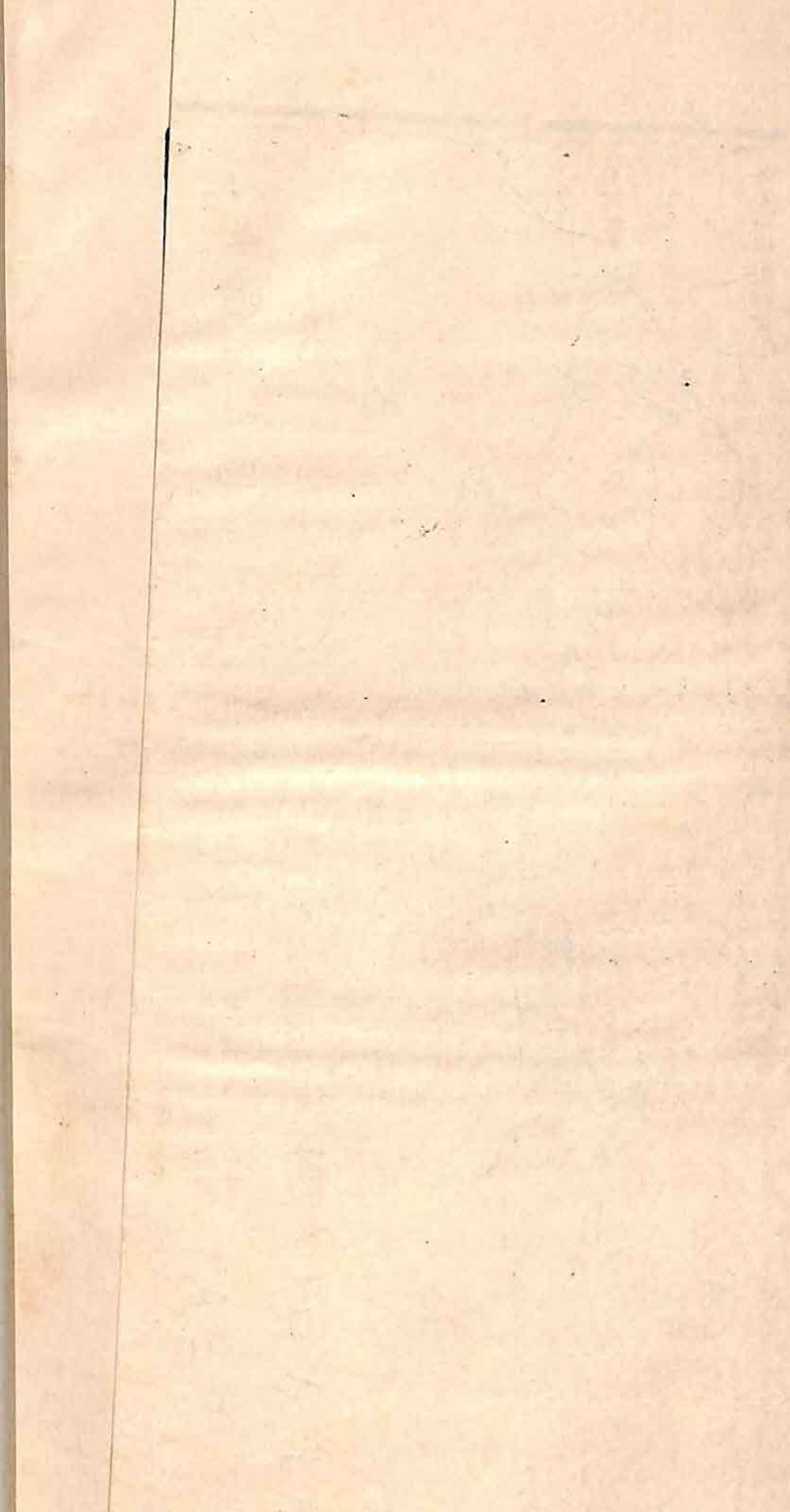
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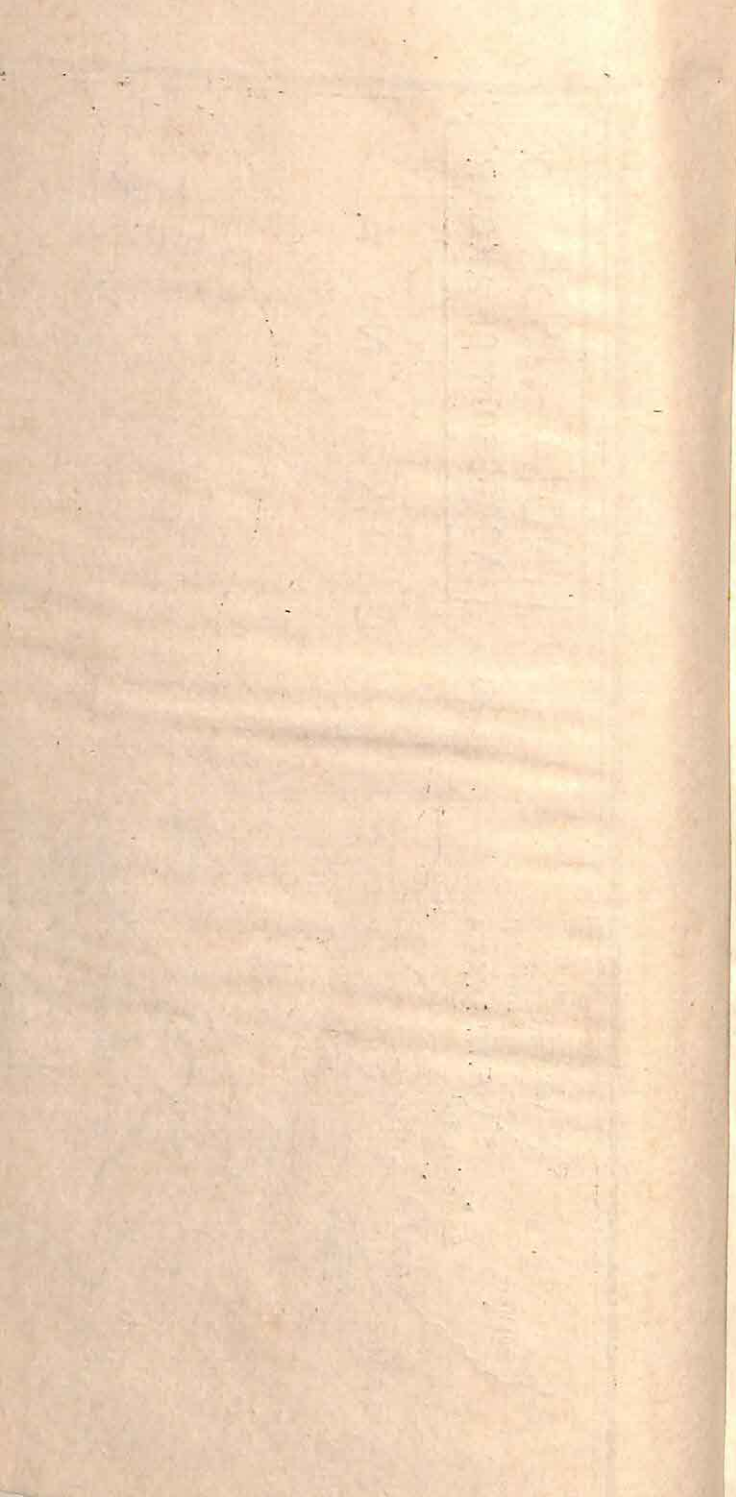
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CHAPTER I

AKBAR AS PRINCE

Ancestry

Akbar was a Turk and his ancestors resided in Trans-Oxiana, that is, the northern part of Turkistan in Central Asia, and belonged to the Chaghtai branch of the Turkish race. Chaghtai was the second son of Chingiz Khan, the celebrated Mongol chief of the 13th century. The Chaghtai Turks were so called because they dwelt in the country beyond the Oxus which had once formed part of the heritage of Chaghtai. But these Turks often intermarried with the Mongols, and Akbar's ancestors, descending through a female of the Mongol race, had two strains of blood in them, the Turkish and the Mongoloid. Akbar's mother was a Persian. It is incorrect to describe any of the Mughal rulers of India as Mongol, although Mughal and Mongol are synonyms. But they are popularly called Mughals. They were in fact more of Turks than of Mongols.

Babur, Akbar's grandfather, was the first Mughal to establish a permanent footing in northern India, most parts of which were conquered by him during his reign which lasted a little over 4 years (1526-1530). His son Humayun was, however, driven out of India in 1540 by his indomitable Pathan rival, Sher Shah. The latter and his descendants retained possession of Hindustan until 1555 when Humayun reappeared and recovered his lost dominion. Humayun had married an Irani girl, Hamida Banu Begam, during his flight in August, 1541, and Akbar was the offspring of this union.

Birth and Boyhood

Akbar was born at the house of Rana Virisal of Amarkot (in the Thar and Parker district of Sindh) on October 15,¹ 1542. His parents, Humayun and Hamida Banu Begam, fleeing back from the vicinity of Jodhpur, had taken shelter with the Rajput chief of the place, who generously assisted Humayun with men and material to enable him to lead an expedition against Thatta and Bhakkar. Humayun started on the expedition in the second week of October, 1542. On the way, Tardi Beg Khan brought him the joyful news of the birth of his son. Humayun, who was then in a destitute condition and could not reward his followers in a befitting manner, called for a China plate and broke on it a pod of musk and, distributing it among his men, said: "This is all the present I can afford to make you on the birth of my son, whose fame will, I trust, be one day expanded all over the world, as the perfume of the musk now fills this tent."

Akbar's childhood was spent in adversity. His father could make little progress in the expedition against Thatta and Bhakkar. Humayun's men foolishly picked a quarrel with his generous host, Rana Virisal. Owing to the coolness between them, Hamida Banu Begam and Akbar had to be brought on the eighth of December to the town of Jun, 75 miles from Amarkot, where Humayun was then encamped. After more than six months' fruitless endeavour to conquer Sindh, Humayun resolved to proceed to Persia to implore help from the king (Shah Tahmasp) of that country. As the party reached Mustang (Mustang), south of Quetta, news came that Askari was coming to attack them. Humayun, not being

¹ V. A. Smith gives November 23, which is wrong. See my Paper on 'The Date of Akbar's Birth' in *Agra College Journal of History and Political Science*, Vol. II (1955) for authorities and the reasons for rejecting Smith's conclusions. See also *Akbar the Great*, Vol. I, p. 1.

in a position to offer resistance, seated Hamida Banu Begam on his own horse and fled in the direction of Kandhar, leaving Akbar, then a baby of one year, behind. Askari picked up the child and took him to Kandhar where he was well looked after by his wife. After an adventurous journey, Humayun reached Persia, and, securing help from the Shah, attacked Kandhar and captured it from his brother, Askari, in September, 1545. On November 15, he captured Kabul from Kamran and sent for his son, Akbar, who had been brought from Kandhar to Kabul during the winter of 1544-45. Akbar was then about three years old and, according to Abul Fazl, he recognised his mother at once and jumped into her lap. His first public appearance was made on the occasion of his circumcision in March, 1546. Smith's view that he was now named Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar in preference to Badr-ud-din, which name had been given to him at the time of his birth, is erroneous. He was christened Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar at his birth.²

As was usual with princes, Akbar had numerous nurses; some of them actually suckled him, while others only looked after him. The most important among his nurses was Jiji Anaga whose husband, Shams-ud-din who had saved Humayun from drowning after the battle of Kanauj in 1540, was subsequently given the title of Atga (Atkah) Khan. Maham Anaga was his head-nurse and her son was the notorious Adham Khan.

Humayun had suffered considerably owing to the inimical conduct of his brothers and had lost and recovered Kabul more than once. In one of the expeditions Kamran had suspended Akbar at the rampart of the city and exposed him to the fire of Humayun's guns. During his father's vicissitudes, the child had to lead an unsettled life.

² *Akbar the Great*, Vol. I, p. 5.

In November, 1547, when Akbar was about five years of age, arrangements were made for his education. One after another tutor was appointed, but they failed to teach their pupil reading and writing. He was a truant boy, more fond of sports and animals, such as camels, horses, dogs and pigeons than of studies. From his very boyhood he possessed a marvellous memory, but would not sit down to learn the alphabet. He, however, became an expert in riding, swordsmanship and other martial exercises. Humayun, who was a scholar of no mean repute, chid Akbar and advised him to spend his time in study. He wrote: "Sit not idle, it's not the time to play: 'Tis the time for arts and for work." But the parental admonitions proved to be of no avail.

On the death of Hindal, in November, 1551, the assignment of Ghazni was conferred upon Akbar and he was betrothed to the daughter of the deceased, Ruqaiyya Begam. Akbar took charge of Ghazni and remained nominally its governor till November, 1554, when Humayun embarked on an expedition for the reconquest of Hindustan.

A little after Humayun had set out for the reconquest of India, he appointed Munim Khan, as Akbar's guardian. On the defeat of Sikandar Sur, a nephew of Sher Shah and one of the claimants to the throne of Delhi, at Sarhind on January 22, 1555, Akbar was credited with the victory in the official records and was formally declared to be the heir-apparent. Within a few months of the re-occupation of Delhi by his father, he was appointed governor of Lahore and the famous Turkoman commander, Bairam Khan, became his guardian in place of Munim Khan. Akbar was then thirteen years of age.³

³ For details see *Akbar the Great*, Vol. I, pp. 16-18.

CHAPTER II

SIX YEARS' TUTELAGE ; FORETASTE OF EARLY STATESMANSHIP

Accession : February 14, 1556

Humayun died as the result of a fall from the staircase of his library situated in *Sher Mandal*, in Delhi on 27th January, 1556. His death was concealed and a man was dressed up to impersonate him in order to enable Akbar to crown himself without opposition. The news of his father's death reached Akbar at Kalanaur, fifteen miles west of Gurdaspur, in the Punjab, where he was engaged in operations against Sikandar Sur who had taken refuge in the fort of Mankot. His guardian Bairam Khan, took immediate steps to enthrone him on a brick platform improvised for the occasion, and proclaimed him Emperor on February 14, 1556. His accession to the throne had already been proclaimed at Delhi on 11th February, 1556, the very day when Humayun's death was made public.

New appointments were made to mark the accession. Bairam Khan was given the title of Khani-Khan and raised to the office of prime minister. All other officers were confirmed in their respective posts which they had held in the time of Humayun.

Condition of India in 1556

At the time of his accession in 1556, Akbar was only nominally the ruler of a small part of the Punjab. Soon after his father's death, Delhi and Agra had been occupied by Hemu and even in the Punjab, Akbar's claim was disputed by Sikandar Sur. The territory of Kabul was practically

independent under his half-brother, Mirza Hakim. Muhammad Adil Shah and Ibrahim Sur were also disputing Akbar's claim to the sovereignty of Hindustan. The remaining provinces were completely independent under their local rulers. The economic condition of the country was even worse. A widespread famine was raging with full fury and devastating the fertile land. The country had also suffered owing to two years' destructive warfare indulged in by the successors of Islam Shah. The famine was particularly severe in the districts of Delhi and Agra where thousands of men died of starvation. "The capital was devastated and nothing remained but a few houses. An epidemic plague ensued and spread through most of the cities of Hindustan. Multitudes died and men were driven to feed on human flesh, parties being formed to seize and eat solitary victims."

Akbar's precarious position

Besides the presence of the three Sur rivals, Akbar's greatest enemy was Hemu, the Hindu prime minister of Muhammad Adil Shah, who was bent upon expelling the Mughals from India. Akbar had also to deal with the disaffection of some of his own nobles, prominent among whom was Abul Mali. This half-crazy man had been spoiled by the attention shown to him by Humayun. He refused to attend the "Coronation Darbar", held on 27th February, and behaved with such impropriety that he had to be imprisoned by Bairam Khan in the fort of Lahore. The loyalty of the army, too, was not above suspicion owing to the precarious position of the new monarch.

Though only a little over thirteen years, Akbar was a precocious boy of extraordinary acumen and ability. He resolved to face the situation with courage, and his guardian, Bairam Khan, supported him with unflinching loyalty.

Success of Akbar's principal rival, Hemu

Adil Shah, who had made Chunar his capital, despatched Hemu to drive the Mughals out of India. A resident of Rewari, Hemu was a Dhusar Bhargava¹ and in his early days used to sell salt in the streets of his town. His first employment in the State service was as a weighman in the market. But, as he possessed remarkable intelligence and tact, he was promoted by Islam Shah who employed him in a confidential capacity at his court. When Adil Shah became king, he promoted Hemu to a position of importance. He thus got an opportunity of making use of his uncommon military and administrative ability. Though a man of humble origin and of puny physique he possessed a soldier's courage and patience, and was an able general. As he proved his worth and loyalty, he was promoted to the post of prime minister, and thus earned the distinction of being the first of the only two Hindus, the other being Todar Mal, who occupied the position of the chief minister of any Muhammadan ruler of Delhi during the medieval period of our country's history. He commanded a large army composed of Afghans and Turks, besides Hindus, and won their loyalty and admiration. He won twenty-two out of the twenty-four battles he fought for his master. He defeated Adil's rival, Ibrahim Sur, more than once, and also Muhammad Shah of Bengal. He was preparing to proceed to attack Agra when Humayun's death occurred. Taking advantage of the incident, he advanced from Gwalior to Agra. Iskandar Khan Uzbeg, governor of the place, took fright and retired towards Delhi without fighting, losing about 3,000 of his men during his retreat. Hemu occupied Agra with its treasure and equipment and proceeded towards Delhi. Tardi Beg Khan, governor of the capital, offered a feeble resist-

¹ In contemporary chronicles he is called Baqqal or Bania but he was, it seems, a Bhargava (Brahman of Gaur sub-caste).

ance at Tughlaqabad, 5 miles east of the Qutb Minar, on the 7th of October, 1556, but was defeated. He fled along with Iskandar Khan towards Sarhind. Ali Quli Khan Shaibani, governor of Sambhal, also abandoned his charge and joined the fugitives.

The entire country from Gwalior to the river Satlaj passed under the control of Hemu. He took the bold step of setting himself up as an independent ruler and carrying out his formal enthronement in the fort of Delhi under the title of Maharaja *Vikramaditya*. He thus became the first and only Hindu to occupy the throne of Delhi during the medieval period of our history. Modern European writers have joined the medieval chronicles (whose prejudice to a Hindu, who made any attempt to free his country from foreign yoke, is obvious) in finding fault with him. No impartial student of history, however, can fail to admire Hemu's qualities of leadership and the promptitude with which he seized the opportunity of banishing alien rule from the capital, though, unluckily, his success proved to be shortlived. If foreigners like Humayun and the descendants of Sher Shah could advance claims to the sovereignty of India, Hemu, who was a real native of the soil, had an equally legitimate, if not better, claim to rule over his ancestral land. Had he succeeded in driving the Mughals out of India, historians would have formed a different opinion about him. The fact that Akbar eventually proved to be a 'national ruler' need not be taken as an argument for the erroneous view that his claims to the throne of Delhi in 1556 were superior to those of Hemu. The charge of treachery against Adil, who had strangled his nephew to death and occupied his throne, is groundless. Hemu only repudiated his authority, though rebellion and even use of force are legitimate against 'foreign rule'. No praise can be too great for Hemu's bold endeavour to

re-establish indigenous rule at Delhi after more than 350 years of foreign domination.

Battle of Panipat, November 5, 1556

The news of the fall of Delhi and Agra alarmed the Mughals and they advised their sovereign, then encamped at Jalandar, to retire immediately to Kabul, as their number was not more than 20,000, while Hemu's army was reputed to be 1,00,000 strong and was flushed with its recent successes. But Bairam Khan decided in favour of recovering Delhi and Akbar heartily agreed with his guardian. Leaving Khizr Khwaja Khan at Lahore to deal with Sikandar Sur, Akbar left Jalandar, on October 13, on his expedition against Hemu. At Sarhind, the three fugitive governors of Agra, Delhi and Sambhal joined Akbar and counselled him to retreat to Kabul. Bairam Khan, however, took prompt steps to silence them by putting Tardi Beg Khan to death with Akbar's permission. Though condemned by some contemporary historians, who accused him of personal jealousy towards the deceased, the act was necessary to restore confidence in the army and to stamp out sedition. The result was wholesome. The army recovered its morale and continued its uneventful march towards Delhi.

Hemu, who had consolidated his position and won over his Afghan officers and soldiers by a liberal distribution of wealth that he had acquired at Delhi and Agra, made preparations to check the advance of the Mughals. He sent forward his advance-guard with a park of his artillery to encounter that of Akbar's which was proceeding rapidly under the command of Ali Quli Khan Shaibani. Ali Quli Khan was lucky enough to inflict by a successful ruse a defeat on Hemu's advance-guard and capture his artillery. Within a week or so the two armies met on the historic field of Panipat on November 5, 1556. Bairam Khan commanded the ten

thousand strong Mughal army from a long distance in the rear and placed Ali Quli Khan (later created Khan Zaman) in charge of the centre, Iskandar Khan Uzbek in charge of the right wing and Abdulla Khan Uzbek in charge of the left wing, while young Akbar was kept at a safe distance behind the army. Hemu's fighting strength consisted of 30,000 Rajput and Afghan cavalry and 500 war elephants who were protected by plate armour and had musketeers and cross-bowmen mounted on their backs. He had, however, no guns. He took his position in the centre and gave charge of his right wing to Shadi Khan Kakkar and left wing to Ramyya, his own sister's son. In spite of the loss of his artillery in a preliminary engagement, Hemu boldly charged the Mughals and overthrew their right and left wings. He then launched an attack on their centre and hurled his 500 elephants against it. The Mughals fought valiantly, but were about to give way and Hemu seemed to be on the point of winning. The Mughal centre, however, could not be broken, for by this time most of the troopers of their defeated wings had collected themselves and moving to Hemu's flanks had launched an attack on them. Moreover, there was a deep ravine in front, which barred Hemu's advance. Taking advantage of it Ali Quli Khan with a part of his cavalry made a detour and attacked Hemu's centre from behind. Hemu made brave counter-charges and fighting continued fiercely. At this time, a stray arrow struck Hemu in the eye and made him unconscious. His army, presuming that its leader was dead, was seized with panic and fled in all directions. Hemu's elephant driver tried to take his unconscious master beyond the reach of danger, but was overtaken by a Mughal officer, named Shah Quli Mahram, who conducted him to Akbar. Bairam Khan asked his royal ward to earn the title of *ghazi* by slaying the infidel Hemu, with his own hands. We are told by a contemporary writer, Muhammad Arif Qandhari,

that he complied with the request and severed Hemu's head from his body. Abul Fazl's statement that he refused to kill a dying man is obviously wrong. But this court writer was in good company, many contemporary historians dittoed him.

The second battle of Panipat produced momentous results. The Mughal victory was decisive. With the fall of Hemu his upstart military power collapsed instantly, and his wife and father fled from Delhi into Mewat. The political results of the battle were even more far-reaching. The Afghan pretensions to the sovereignty of Hindustan were gone for ever. The victors occupied Delhi on the 6th of November, though some part of its immense treasure was carried away by Hemu's widow. Agra, too, was occupied without delay. An unsuccessful attempt was made to apprehend Hemu's widow. His aged father was captured and put to death on his refusal to embrace Islam. Immediate steps were taken to complete the operations against Sikandar Sur, who was compelled to surrender in May 1557. He was granted an assignment in Bihar, from where he was, a little after, expelled by Akbar. He died a fugitive in Bengal (1558-1559). Muhammad Adil, next Sur claimant to the throne of Delhi, was killed in 1557, at Munghir in a battle against the governor of Bengal. Ibrahim, the third Sur pretender, had to find asylum in Orissa. Thus, within two years of his victory at Panipat there remained no powerful Sur rival to contest Akbar's claim to the sovereignty of Hindustan.

Regency of Bairam Khan, 1556-60

The outstanding achievements of Bairam Khan as a regent were the defeat of Hemu and the elimination of Akbar's Sur rivals. The next problem awaiting solution was the setting up of a provisional administration in the territory that had passed into his possession after the battle of Panipat. A rough and ready type of government for the maintenance



of order and realisation of revenue was established. While operations were still continuing against Sikandar Sur, Akbar's mother and other ladies of the family arrived from Kabul and rejoined him at Mankot. At Jalandar Akbar publicly gave evidence of his regard for his guardian by permitting Bairam Khan to marry his cousin, Salima Begam (daughter of Humayun's sister Gulrukh). On his return to Agra where he took up his residence in Sikandar Lodi's brick fort then known as Badalgarh, in October, 1558, Bairam Khan made arrangements for Akbar's education, and appointed Mir Abdul Latif his tutor. He was a distinguished scholar and so liberal in his religious views that in Persia, his native country, he was considered a *Sunni*, while in India he was looked upon as a *Shia*. But even this 'paragon of greatness' failed to persuade his royal pupil to study. Akbar continued to spend his time in hunting, elephant fights and similar other pursuits. The work of administration remained in the hands of Bairam Khan, who discharged his duties satisfactorily.

Besides consolidating the newly occupied territory, Bairam sent expeditions to Gwalior and Jaunpur. Raja Ram Shah, who was attempting to recover his ancestral capital, was driven away and the fortress of Gwalior was occupied in 1557. Ali Quli Khan, now entitled *Khan Zaman*, reoccupied Sambhal and seized the country between that town and Lucknow. Ajmer and the fort of Jaitaran in Rajasthan were also conquered. But expeditions to Ranthambhor and Chunar did not prove successful. Another expedition, planned to conquer Malwa, had to be recalled owing to strained relations between Bairam Khan and Akbar.

Fall of Bairam Khan, 1560

The regency of Bairam Khan, which had been responsible for the firm re-establishment of the Mughal rule in Hindustan, lasted for four years.

Early in 1560 the guardian was dismissed from office and directed by Akbar to proceed on a pilgrimage to Mecca, which was then considered as an exile from the country. The events leading to the downfall of such an indomitable personality as Bairam Khan, naturally aroused great interest among contemporary writers who have left a detailed account of the episode. Though a very loyal and successful administrator and guardian, Bairam Khan had never really been popular with the members of the Mughal court. In the first place, he was a *Shia* whereas the king, his household and the nobility were *Sunnis*. Secondly, though devoted to the interest of the State "his disposition was arbitrary, haughty and jealous and he could not easily tolerate the presence of possible rivals near his young master." Thirdly, as Akbar began to attain maturity and take interest in the State affairs, Bairam Khan's influence naturally began to decline and the protector grew a little impatient and betrayed lack of discretion in dealing with the situation. His enemies seized every opportunity to exaggerate his faults and to misrepresent his intentions. Fourthly, Akbar who was growing to manhood and resenting the galling tutelage, was desirous of asserting his authority. He had no privy purse and his household was not as well-provided as the family and dependants of Bairam Khan. Fifthly, the young emperor's immediate attachee, such as his foster-mother Maham Anaga, her son Adham Khan and son-in-law Shihab-ud-din, who had ambitions of sharing the general prosperity of their patron's growing Empire and wielding power, looked upon Bairam Khan as an obstacle in their way and poisoned the ears of Akbar and of his mother against him. For these reasons, a coolness grew up between the Protector and his royal ward which soon deepened into a breach. Bairam Khan's execution of Tardi Beg had given offence to several members of the court, which being orthodox *Sunni* felt its religious susceptibilities

injured by the appointment of Shaikh Gadai, a *Shia*, to the important post of *Sadr-us-Sadur*. It so happened one day that, while Akbar was enjoying an elephant fight, one of the beasts ran through the ropes of the tents of Bairam Khan who took offence and punished the *mahaut*, although the emperor had assured him that no indignity was intended. On another day, a royal elephant attacked Bairam Khan's barge, while he was boating in the Yamuna. Akbar sent the *mahaut* concerned a captive to the Protector who inflicted a severe punishment on him. Bairam Khan dismissed Mulla Pir Muhammad, formerly Akbar's tutor, Bairam Khan's own deputy and protege, which, too, gave offence to Akbar. Several other trivial incidents of this type occurred and widened the breach between Bairam Khan and his master, who was persuaded by the dominant party in the *haram* to dismiss the regent. A plot was now formed against him. One day, sometime in March 1560, while Bairam Khan was at Agra and the emperor was out-a-hunting in the vicinity of that town, he received news of his mother's illness. Sending word to Bairam Khan, he proceeded to Delhi to visit his mother. Maham Anaga and other ladies gathered around him in the palace and complained bitterly against Bairam Khan whom they accused of harbouring evil designs of treason. The party won over the governors of Delhi, Lahore and Kabul to their cause, and took steps to strengthen the fortifications of the capital. When the conspirators saw that the young emperor was impressed, Maham Anaga, the head of the *haram* party, playing her trump card, begged leave to proceed to Mecca, as she pretended to be afraid of Bairam Khan's resentment. The trick prevailed and Akbar decided to dismiss Bairam Khan, and sent him a written message through his tutor, Abdul Latif, in these words: "As I was fully assured of your honesty and fidelity, I left all important affairs of State in your charge, and thought only of my own pleasures. I have determined to take

the reins of government into my own hands, and it is desirable that you should now make the pilgrimage to Mecca upon which you have been so long intent. A suitable assignment out of the *parganas* of Hindustan will be made for your maintenance, the revenue of which will be transmitted to you by your agents."

In spite of his friends' advice to the contrary, Bairam Khan did not like to stain the glorious record of his life-long loyal service to the Mughal ruling family and, after some hesitation, complied with the royal command and surrendered the insignia of his office to Akbar. But, as Bairam Khan proceeded in a leisurely manner towards the Punjab to recover his private treasure, which he had left at Sarhind and Lahore, the court party sent Mulla Pir Muhammad, a former ungrateful protege of the regent, with a large army to hasten him out of the kingdom. This enraged the ex-regent, who, after leaving his family in the fort of Bhatinda, turned towards Jalandar and decided to offer armed resistance, though in a half-hearted manner. He was, however, defeated at Tilwara on the Bias, and was brought before Akbar by Munim Khan, who had just been given the Protector's title of *Khan Khanan*. Akbar forgave his former guardian and offered him three alternatives: first, to receive the districts of Kalpi and Chanderi as governor; second, to accept the post of his confidential adviser at court; and third, to depart for Mecca. Bairam Khan, who was too high-minded to accept any inferior position than that he had so far held, decided to leave for Mecca. He marched, by way of Rajputana, for Patna (Anhilwara) where he was attacked by a band of Afghans, and stabbed to death by one Mubarak Khan whose father had been killed at the battle of Macchiwara in 1555. His family was brought to Ahmadabad in a destitute condition. Akbar had them escorted to the court and received them honourably. He married Bairam's widow, Salima

Begam, and brought up his infant son Abdur Rahim under his protection. The child rose to the highest rank and was honoured in 1584 by his father's title of *Khan Khanan*. Like all masterful persons, Bairam Khan had considered himself indispensable ; his fall was, sooner or later, inevitable. The court party, which was anxious to seize power and to do away with the Protector, must be held responsible for the indecent manner in which the latter's fall was brought about. Akbar, however, deserves credit for generously forgiving his actions and appreciating the services of one who was mainly responsible for the restoration of the Mughals.

Early Reforms ; Enslaving of war prisoners abolished, 1562

Soon after entering his twentieth year, Akbar showed evidence of a broadmindedness which his predecessors had lacked and which was to make him famous as the greatest Muslim ruler of India. When he became twenty according to the lunar calendar, he experienced in himself a remarkable spiritual change which produced a wholesome result on his attitude towards his people. "On the completion of my twentieth year," said Akbar, "I experienced an internal bitterness and from the lack of spiritual provision for my last journey, my soul was seized with exceeding sorrow." In April 1562, he issued orders strictly forbidding the practice of enslaving the prisoners of war. It was invariably the rule, during the medieval times to make slaves of the prisoners of war and to convert them forcibly to Islam. The edict not only put an end to an inhuman practice, but also saved Hinduism from mass conversion of its adherents to an alien faith.

Death of Adham Khan and Akbar's freedom from haram party, May 16, 1562

Desirous of freeing himself from the control of his chief nurse, Maham Anaga, Akbar had appointed

his foster-father Shams-ud-din Atka Khan his chief minister, in November 1561, in place of Munim Khan. The appointment was highly displeasing to Maham Anaga, Adham Khan, Munim Khan, Shihab-ud-din Ahmad Khan and certain other influential members of the *haram* party. Anxious to retain his position of predominance, Adham Khan entered the palace with a few of his followers on May 16, 1562, and stabbed to death Atka Khan, who was engaged in his official duties. Next, he attempted to enter the royal apartments, where Akbar was sleeping at the time, to make his peace with his sovereign ; but he was prevented by an eunuch who bolted the door from inside. The noise awoke Akbar who came out of the *haram* by another door and angrily asked Adham Khan as to why he had killed the minister. Adham Khan not only put forth lame excuses, but also had the audacity of seizing Akbar's hands and even his sword, as the king attempted to disarm the villain. Getting wild with rage, Akbar gave a blow with his fist into Adham's face, which stunned him. At his orders, Adham was bound hand and foot and twice thrown down the palace terrace. He died instantaneously. Adham's accomplices, Munim Khan, Shihab-ud-din and others, absconded to escape just punishment. Akbar then informed Maham Anaga, who was lying ill, what had happened. She replied: "Your majesty has done well," and died forty days after her son's death. Akbar thus got rid of the baneful influence of the *haram* party. He erected a fine mausoleum on Adham's grave at Delhi and not only forgave Munim Khan, but also reinstated him as his chief minister.

Abolition of Pilgrims' Tax, 1563

By this time the young king had decided to be his own master and to map out his own policy for the benefit of his dynasty and country, without being trammelled by any other consideration. The aboli-

tion of the practice of enslaving the prisoners of war was only the first indication of the broad policy that was gradually evolving in the young emperor's mind. The next concrete evidence of that policy came to light in 1563, when orders were issued for the abolition of the pilgrims' tax throughout his kingdom. That year, while encamped at Mathura, it was brought to his notice that his government levied a tax on the pilgrims who visited Hindu places of pilgrimage. He felt that it was contrary to the will of God that anybody should be asked to pay a tax for worshipping Him, although his form of worship might be 'erroneous'.

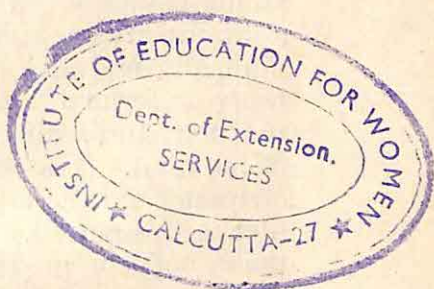
Abolition of Jizya, 1564

Early next year (1564), Akbar abolished throughout his dominions the most hated tax, called *Jizya*, which all non-Muslims were required to pay. This tax had imposed a great disability on the Hindus and constantly reminded them that they were treated as an inferior people. Akbar who had decided to remove all invidious distinctions between various sections of his subjects, caused a substantial loss to his treasury by this reform. But he won the good will of a vast majority of the inhabitants of the country.

Death of Khwaja Muazzam, 1564

In March 1564 Akbar inflicted a condign punishment on his maternal uncle Khwaja Muazzam and completely freed himself from the influence of all his relatives, male or female. Muazzam was a half crazy man and had committed a number of murders and other grave offences. He wanted to kill his wife also. On getting this information, Akbar rode to the Khwaja's country-house near Agra. Although, he was late in saving the life of the lady, whom the Khwaja had already killed, he ordered the villain to be ducked into the Yamuna along with his servants; but, as he was not drowned, he was sent as prisoner

to Gwalior where he died some time after. After this incident, no member of his court ever dared to influence his policy by unfair means. As Smith writes, "Akbar continued to show all proper respect to his mother, but he did not allow her to control his policy, which was conceived on principles distasteful to her."



CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF IMPERIAL POLICY ; AKBAR'S CONQUESTS AND ANNEXATIONS

Akbar's Policy of Conquest

During the period of two years (1560-1562), following the dismissal of Bairam Khan when Akbar was not yet entirely his own master and Maham Anaga was acting as the *de facto* prime minister, the young emperor did not take enough interest in the administration, and allowed the *haram* party to manage the affairs of the State. Yet at this very time, he formed an ambitious design of conquering northern India and making himself the real emperor of the land. The seeds of the imperial policy that characterised the later years of his reign were sown during this period. According to Abul Fazl, Akbar's policy of conquests was prompted by his desire to give peace and prosperity to the people who were suffering under the selfish and unbridled despotism of local potentates. This is hardly true so far as Akbar's early conquests were concerned. His first object was to regain the territories that had been lost by the latter. Next, for some years of his reign he was actuated by love of territory, power and wealth, and his decision to reduce and annex the neighbouring kingdoms was for the extension of his dominions. He did not make a secret of it. He used to say, "A monarch should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him. The army should always be exercised in warfare, lest for want of practice they become self-indulgent." It was only after Akbar had become master

of most of northern India that patriotic urge and humanitarian sentiments influenced his policy. During the second half of his reign he was undoubtedly inspired by the ancient Hindu ideal of attempting to bring about the political unity of the entire country and of giving security and happiness to the people of the land.

The Conquest of Malwa, 1561

The first conquest, after Bairam's exit, was that of the province of Malwa. Its ruler, Baz Bahadur, son of Shujaat Khan, governor of the province during the reigns of Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah, was devoted to music and was fond of the company of dancers and singers. Among them the most famous was his mistress Rup Mati, who was renowned for her beauty, charms and poetic talents. The administration of the province, allowed to take its own course, was naturally weak. Adham Khan, son of Maham Anaga, was selected due to his mother's influence, for leading an expedition against Sarangpur, the capital of Malwa. Pir Muhammad Khan was associated with him. Baz Bahadur took no notice of the invaders until the latter had reached within 90 miles of Sarangpur. The immediate threat to his life, however, aroused him from his 'dreams of love and music' and issuing out of his palace at the head of his demoralised and discontented troops he fought a battle at a distance of three miles from Sarangpur on March 29, 1561. He was badly defeated and fled from the field. All the treasure, property and family of Baz Bahadur, including his beloved Rup Mati, fell into the hands of the victors. Adham Khan was eager to obtain possession of Rup Mati, but she took poison in order to save her honour. Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad inflicted untold misery on the people of the province.

Appropriating most of the spoils, including women and elephants, Adham Khan sent to court only a fraction of what he had seized at Sarangpur. This

together with the reports of the barbarities committed by him in Malwa, enraged Akbar beyond measure. He left Agra on 27th April for Malwa in order to punish Adham Khan. Adham was dismayed to find the Emperor at Sarangpur on 13th May; he humbled himself before him and begged for his forgiveness. He was pardoned only when Maham Anaga had hastened to the place and interceded for her son. She concealed her son's crimes by having two beauties of Baz Bahadur's *haram* put to death, lest they should disclose the ill treatment meted out to them and other victims by Adham Khan. Akbar then returned to Agra, leaving Adham Khan as governor of Malwa.

The journey from and back to Agra was performed in a hurried fashion and in the hottest weather. Like Alexander the Great, Akbar was indifferent to heat and cold and invariably displayed great personal courage and daring in the midst of danger. During his return journey to Agra near Narwar, he killed a lioness with one blow of his sword. He took delight in mastering wild elephants and other ferocious animals.

Rebellion in Jaunpur and Acquisition of Chunar, 1561

While Malwa was being reduced to subjection by Adham Khan, there occurred a serious rebellion in the province of Jaunpur which was then the eastern part of Akbar's dominions. Sher Khan, son of the late Muhammad Adil Shah Sur, collected a large army consisting of 20,000 cavalry, 50,000 infantry and 500 elephants, and invaded Jaunpur. This caused a great consternation among the people. But Khan Zaman (Ali Quli Khan), the governor, put up a stiff resistance and was soon reinforced by an imperial force. Although the rebel army was far superior in number, it was badly defeated and put to flight. After this victory, Khan Zaman displayed an inclination to rebel. Like Adham Khan, he misappropriated

most of the Afghan elephants and equipage and sent only nominal spoils to Agra. Akbar thought it necessary to chastise the delinquent governor and acting with his usual promptitude hastened towards Jaunpur in the heat of July. Khan Zaman and his brother Bahadur were terrified and met the emperor at Kara and placing all the elephants at his disposal, begged his forgiveness. With his usual magnanimity Akbar accepted Khan Zaman's submission and sent him back as governor of Jaunpur. At the same time, he dispatched Asaf Khan to wrest Chunargarh from the hands of the Afghans. In August, 1561, Chunar was acquired and it became an outpost of the empire in the east.

Submission of and Alliance with Jaipur, 1562

In November, 1561, Shams-ud-din Atka Khan was appointed prime minister. At the end of the year Adham Khan whose administration was highly tyrannical was recalled from Malwa and Pir Muhammad was promoted to his place. In January, 1562, Akbar made his first pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Shaikh Muin-ud-din Chishti of Ajmer. On the way, he received Bhar Mal, ruler of Amber (Jaipur) and the first Rajput King to acknowledge his suzerainty and accepted the hand of his daughter. Bhar Mal had been hard pressed on account of the continued aggressions of Sharf-ud-din, the Mughal governor of Ajmer, who had made his nephews captives and was demanding a huge ransom, and he saw no way out of his threatened ruin except seeking Akbar's protection. The marriage took place at Sambhar at the end of January during the emperor's halt on his return journey to Agra. The princess became the mother of Jahangir and exerted great influence on Akbar and his policy. The marriage unlike those contracted by the previous Sultans with Hindu ladies was voluntary. It cemented the alliance between the two ruling houses of Delhi and Jaipur. Akbar took Bhagwan Das, the adopted son of Bhar Mal, and

the latter's grandson Man Singh into his service and treated them as his relatives.

Acquisition of Merta, 1562

At about this time, Mirza Sharf-ud-din, a prominent officer who held an assignment near Ajmer, was deputed to reduce the fortress of Merta in Marwar. It was in possession of Jaimal, the future defender of Chittor and a vassal of Udaya Singh of Mewar. The fortress surrendered after a brief siege in which Kachhwaha Rajputs fought on the side of the Mughals, and the garrison was promised safe conduct on the condition of the delivery of the fortress with all its ammunition and other equipage. Some of the Rajputs under Deva Das, however, offered resistance and set fire to the military stores and attacked the Mughals. But, in spite of their gallantry, all of them, numbering 200, were overwhelmed and slain along with their leader. Merta passed into the hands of the Mughals.

Rebellion in Malwa, 1562

The tyrannical conduct of Mulla Pir Muhammad, the new governor, made the Mughal rule unpopular in Malwa. The Mulla committed great atrocities on the helpless population, sparing neither age nor rank, nor even sex. Baz Bahadur, who had in 1560 fled to Khandesh, carried on depredations in the southern districts of the province, and in alliance with his protector, Mubarak II, and Tufal Khan of Berar, launched an attack on the Mulla. Pir Muhammad was obliged to proceed against the invader, but was defeated and driven back. While crossing the river Narmada, his horse was upturned by a camel and he was drowned. Baz Bahadur was thus able to recover his kingdom. His success, however, was shortlived. Akbar dispatched an army under Abdulla Khan Uzbek who drove away Baz Bahadur into exile and reoccupied Malwa. Having suffered from misery and privation during

his adventurous flight from court to court, Baz Bahadur thought it politic to submit to Akbar in the 15th year of his reign. He was enrolled as a *mansabdar* of 1,000 and was subsequently promoted to the rank of 2,000.

Conquest of Gondwana, 1564

In 1564, Akbar directed Asaf Khan to subdue the ten-century-old Gond kingdom of Garha-Katanga, which extended from Ratanpur in the east to Raisin in the west and Rewa in the north to the frontier of the Dakhan in the south, and comprised the northern districts of the modern Madhya Pradesh. Its ruler was Rani Durgavati, a Chandel Princess of Mahoba and regent of her son Vir Narayan. Though the young Raja had attained majority, he allowed his mother to carry on the administration. Durgavati was a brave and wise ruler. She was a good shot with gun and shot animals of the chase with her gun. People were happy under her rule. She possessed a powerful army of 20,000 horse, 1,000 elephants and a large number of infantry, and had successfully defended her kingdom against the aggressive attacks of Baz Bahadur and the Miana Afghans of Malwa. In pursuance of his settled policy of aggressive conquests, Akbar planned an attack on Gondwana without any provocation. The army of invasion under Asaf Khan consisted of 50,000 troops. The Rani faced them bravely with her greatly inferior force, and resisted them for two days at Narhi to the east of Garha. Vir Narayan was wounded and obliged to withdraw at the request of his mother and this further weakened her small army. In spite of her brave stand, the Rani, too, was wounded with two arrows. She stabbed herself to death in order to avoid capture and dishonour. The invader now marched to Chauragarh where Vir Narayan bravely offered battle, but he was defeated and killed. His women offered *jauhar*. Asaf Khan acquired an immense booty, which included

gold, silver, jewels and 1,000 elephants. He sent only 200 elephants to Akbar and kept the rest of the spoils for himself. At this time, Akbar was not powerful enough to punish him for his delinquency.

Siege of Chittor, 1567-68

In September 1567, Akbar resolved to conquer Chittor, the capital of Mewar, whose ruler, Udaya Singh, looked upon the Emperor as an 'unclean foreigner' and had nothing but contempt for Bhar Mal, ruler of Amber, who had not only submitted but also entered into a matrimonial alliance with him. Moreover, the Rana had given shelter to Baz Bahadur, the ex-king of Malwa. Mewar lay on the route to Gujarat which could not be easily conquered and the lines of communication between Delhi and Ahmadabad could not be safe without establishing imperial control over Chittor. But the most important cause of the proposed expedition was political. Without reducing Mewar, the premier state in Rajasthan, the ruler of which was universally acknowledged as the head of the Rajputs in the country, Akbar could not establish his claim of overlordship over northern India. Udaya Singh, the reigning King of Mewar, though denounced by Tod as an unworthy son of a worthy sire, was not altogether devoid of the qualities of a soldier, and made commendable arrangements for the defence of his capital. Akbar arrived before the gigantic fort on October 23 and invested it, assigning different sectors of its wide circumference to his officers and establishing many batteries on various points. It took about one month to complete the investment. The siege lasted for a long time as each side was determined to achieve its object—Akbar to capture the fort and the Sisodias to beat him back. As the rate of casualties among the imperial troops was about 200 a day, Akbar decided to construct mines and erect *sabats* (covered ways) for the approaches. The mines were fired on December 17; but the garrison repaired the breaches

immediately and drove back the assailants, killing 200 of them. There seemed little prospect of an early termination of the siege. By chance on February 23, 1568, Akbar fired a shot at a prominent man on the rampart of the fort, who was directing defence operations and supervising the repair of a breach in the wall. He was Jaimal, to whom the defence of the fort was entrusted by the nobles, who, aware of Akbar's grim determination, had sometime after the commencement of the siege sent away their chief, Udaya Singh, to a place of safety in the Aravali Hills. As Jaimal was fatally wounded, the Sisodias were filled with despair, and their ladies committed *jauhar* during the night. The flames rising from the funeral pyres convinced Akbar that the victim of his shot was Jaimal. The next morning the Rajputs decided to take up the offensive. According to tradition, Jaimal, although fatally wounded, was carried on his horse as the leader of the offensive. After his fall in the battle, the command devolved on the young Sisodia noble, Fateh Singh of Kailwa. Fatha, as he was popularly known, put on the yellow robes and accompanied by his wife and mother led the attack ; but the brave Rajputs were overpowered by superior numbers and slain to a man.

Akbar entered the fort the next day, and ordered a general massacre, as his wrath was inflamed by the stiff resistance offered to his arms. The victims numbered 30,000. This act of needless brutality is a stain on Akbar's memory. He expiated part of his guilt by commemorating the heroism of Jaimal and Fateh Singh by erecting their statues, mounted on elephants, at the gate of his palace at Agra. On February 20, he appointed Asaf Khan governor of Mewar, most of which was in the Rana's hand, and then returned to Agra.

The fall of Chittor was followed by the gratifying news that Sulaiman Karrani, the ruler of Patna, had accepted Akbar's proposal to recognise him as

Emperor and caused the *khutba* to be recited and coins struck in Akbar's name.

Acquisition of Ranthambhor, 1568

In April, 1568, Akbar sent an expedition to reduce Ranthambhor, whose ruler, Raja Surjan Rai was a Hara Rajput of Bundi and a vassal of the Rana of Mewar. But the army had to be recalled before reaching its destination owing to the invasion of Malwa by the rebellious Mirzas. In February, 1569, Akbar was free to commence the siege of the fortress under his personal supervision. Mines were laid, a covered way (*sabat*) was constructed, and pieces of heavy cannon were dragged up to the eminence, opposite the Ran gate, from where they kept up a "heavy fire". The siege lasted for about a month and a half, and caused considerable loss of life on both sides. The fort was, however, surrendered on March 18, 1569. There are two versions of the circumstances leading to the fall of Ranthambhor. According to Tod, the resistance offered by Surjan Rai was so stout that it was felt desirable to avoid a prolonged conflict and to induce the Hara chief to surrender. Bhagwan Das of Amber, therefore, paid a visit to Surjan Rai, and he was accompanied by Akbar in the disguise of a companion. The Rajputs recognised Akbar who revealed his identity, and conducted the negotiations in person. This version of the story was accepted by V. A. Smith. The other version is that of the historian Badayuni, which has found favour with Wolseley Haig. According to Badayuni, Surjan Rai rightly feeling that when an impregnable fort like Chittor could not long withstand the imperial attack, and there was no use continuing an unequal conflict, sent his sons Danda and Bhoj to wait on Akbar and beg for quarter. As Surjan Rai was a vassal of the Rana of Chittor, whose capital had already passed into the hands of Akbar, Badayuni's version seems more plausible. Akbar dictated peace to Surjan Rai, the

terms of which were lenient, and returned to Agra. The impregnable fort thus passed into the hands of the Mughals.

Surrender of Kalinjar, 1569

The fall of the fortresses of Chittor and Ranthambhor added immensely to the prestige of the Emperor. The only other fort in northern India, impregnable in the eyes of the people, that remained out of his control was that of Kalinjar in the modern Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. It had defied Sher Shah, and was at this time in the possession of Raja Rama Chandra of Bhatha. In August, 1569, Majnun Khan Qaqshal was despatched against him. Rama Chandra, aware of the fate of Chittor and Ranthambhor, offered little resistance and submitted. The Raja was given a *jagir* near Allahabad and Kalinjar was placed under the charge of Majnun Khan.

Submission of Marwar, 1570

In November, 1570, Akbar paid a visit to Nagaur, where he received, through Bhagwant Das of Amber, the submission of the rulers of Jodhpur and Bikaner. Chandra Sen, son of Maldeva and the then ruler of Jodhpur, came and waited on the Emperor; Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikaner and his son, Rai Singh, were also received in audience. Rawal Har Rai of Jaisalmer, too, submitted. Akbar married a princess of the Bikaner ruling family and also the daughter of Har Rai of Jaisalmer. Thus, by the end of 1570, the whole of Rajasthan, except Mewar with its tributary states of Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh, recognised the suzerainty of Akbar.

Conquest of Gujarat, 1572-73

The Emperor now turned his attention to Gujarat, which he desired to conquer and annex to his kingdom. The province had for some time

remained in the possession of his father. It was a rich emporium of commerce between India, Turkey, Syria, Persia, Trans-Oxiana and the countries of Europe, and, therefore, very wealthy. Moreover, Gujarat lay on the way to Mecca, and Akbar was naturally anxious to bring it under his control in order to provide safe journey to the Haj pilgrims. The condition of the province at this time was deplorable. Muzaffar Khan III, who was its nominal king, was powerless, and a bloody struggle for supremacy was in progress among his ambitious and selfish nobles. Akbar's rebellious relatives, the Mirzas, had taken shelter there, and established themselves in several towns of this rich province. For these reasons, Akbar thought it imperative to reduce Gujarat. Fortunately, a civil war was going on there and the party headed by Itimad Khan appealed to Akbar for intervention. Taking the opportunity, Akbar made preparations for an expedition and sent forward 10,000 horse under Khan Kalan towards Ahmadabad, and in September, 1572, himself set out to undertake the campaign. His army did not meet with great resistance and in November Akbar took possession of Ahmadabad. Muzaffar Khan III, the nominal ruler, was found hiding in a cornfield and brought as a prisoner. The leading nobles, including Itimad Khan, came and waited on Akbar, who appointed Khan Azam (Mirza Aziz Koka) governor of Gujarat. From Ahmadabad, Akbar proceeded to Cambay, where he received the merchants of Turkey, Syria, Persia, Trans-Oxiana and Portugal. He then returned to Surat and defeated Ibrahim Mirza in the well-contested battle of Sarnal in December, 1572. Next, Surat was besieged, and it fell into his hands in February, 1573. After these successes, he returned to Agra.

Rebellion in Gujarat, 1573

As soon as Akbar's back was turned, Muham-

mad Husain Mirza, who had fled to Daulatabad, returned to Gujarat. Forming an alliance with the disaffected nobles of the province, he besieged the governor, Khan Azam, in Ahmadabad. As Khan Azam was powerless against the rebels, Akbar, accompanied by a small army, left Fatehpur Sikri on September 2, having performed the long journey of more than 450 miles in eleven days all told. The rebels, who did not believe the report of the Emperor's sudden arrival, were thunderstruck to find him at the head of the army of relief from Fatehpur Sikri. Contrary to the advice of his cautious officials, Akbar immediately crossed the river Sabarmati and charged the enemy. In the hand-to-hand fight, in which his horse was wounded and Akbar himself dangerously exposed, he defeated the rebels and took Muhammad Husain Mirza a prisoner. Ikhtihar-ul-Mulk, another principal rebel, who was watching the besieged Khan Azam, turned up to contest the royal army, but was slain. The rebellion was now broken. Shah Mirza, the only rebel who escaped, became a homeless wanderer. After this grand success, the Emperor returned to Fatehpur Sikri on October 5, 1573. The historian Smith has rightly described Akbar's second Gujarat expedition as "the quickest campaign on record." The conquest of Gujarat pushed Akbar's western frontier to the sea and brought him into contact with the Portuguese who made peace with him. It is a pity that the Emperor did not think of building a navy for the protection of his empire and for commerce with the outer world.

Conquest of Bihar and Bengal, 1574-76

Sulaiman Karrani, who had been governor of Bihar during the last days of Sher Shah's reign and asserted his independence on the fall of the Sur dynasty, and had, early in 1568, acknowledged Akbar as his sovereign, died in 1572. He had brought the province of Bengal and Orissa under his rule and

transferred his capital to Tanda. But his son, Daud, proclaimed his independence, and further incurred Akbar's displeasure by attacking Zamania (in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh), then the eastern outpost of the Mughal empire. In 1574, Akbar undertook an expedition against the pre-sumptuous youth and expelled him from Bihar, which province was now annexed to the empire. Daud fled from Bengal towards Orissa. Akbar left Munim Khan in-charge of the Bengal campaign and returned to Fatehpur Sikri. Munim Khan defeated Daud at Tukarao near the eastern bank of the Suvarna-rekha on March 3, 1575, and made Tanda his headquarters. But he did not push his advantage and allowed the fugitive king of Bengal to regain a part of his power. In October, Daud made an attempt to recover Bengal. Accordingly, a fresh campaign was organised and Daud was finally defeated and killed in a battle near Rajmahal in July 1576. Bangladesh was now finally annexed, but a few of the local chiefs, notably Kedar Rai of Vikrampur, Kandarp Narayan of Bekarganj, Pratapditya of Jessor, and Isa Khan in East Bengal, continued to give trouble for some years more.

Attempt to Conquer Mewar ; Battle of Haldi Ghati, June 18, 1576

Although Chittor, the capital, and with it the eastern part of Mewar, had been occupied in February, 1568, a major portion of that kingdom remained under the control of Rana Udaya Singh. His indomitable warrior-son, Pratap, who was crowned king in highly depressing circumstances at Gogunda, 19 miles north-west of Udaipur, on March 3, 1572, pledged to offer uncompromising resistance to the Mughals. Undaunted by his slender resources, defection in his ranks, and the hostility of his own brother, Shakti Singh, he resolved to fight the aggression of one who was 'immeasurably the richest monarch on the face of the earth.' On

his part Akbar was equally determined to wrest the remaining (western) part of Mewar from the hands of the valiant Rana. In April, 1576, he sent a powerful army under Man Singh of Amber to invade the remnant of Mewar. From Mandal Garh (in Eastern Mewar) Man Singh proceeded by way of Mohi (south of Raj Samudra Lake) towards Gogunda and encamped on the plain at the northern end of Haldi Ghati, a spur of the Aravalli chain, between that town and the village of Khamnaur on the southern bank of the river Banas. Here the imperial army was attacked by Pratap, who marched from Gogunda to check the advance of the invader on June 18, 1576. Tradition has magnified the Rana's army to twenty thousand horse and that of Man Singh to eight thousand. The fact, however, is that the Mewar force did not exceed three thousand horse and a few hundred Bhil infantry. Man Singh commanded ten thousand picked cavalry of whom nearly four thousand were Kachhwaha Rajputs, one thousand other Hindus and the remaining were mostly Central Asian Turks, Uzbegs and Kazzaqs, with a thousand Sayyids of Barha and Shaikhzadas of Fatehpur Sikri. The advance-guard (about 800 horse) of the tiny Mewar force was composed of Hakim Khan Sur, Bhim Singh of Dodia, Ram Das Rathor (son of Jaimal) and a few others, the right wing (500 horse) was under Ram Shah Tanwar of Gwalior and Bhama Shah, the left wing was under Bida Mana and the centre was commanded by the Rana himself. The Bhils of Punja and a band of other troops stood in the rear. The imperial army was preceded by a line of skirmishers under Sayyid Hashim of Barha. Its vanguard was commanded by Jagannath Kachhwaha and Ali Asaf Khan (a Kazvini Khwaja) and was strengthened by a powerful *iltmish* (advanced reserve) under Madho Singh Kachhwaha. The right wing was composed of the Sayyids of Barha, the left wing was under Mulla Qazi Khan Badakhshi (later surnamed Ghazi Khan)

and Rao Loon Karan of Sambhar, and the centre was under the command of Man Singh himself. Issuing from behind the Haldighati, the Rana made a frontal attack on the Mughal army which lay on the plain to the north-west of the foot-track at the northern entrance of the *ghati*. So desperate was the charge that the Mughal vanguard and left wing were scattered and its right wing and centre were hard pressed. But the Rana's army was very small in number and he had no reserve or rear guard to back up his initial success. In his attempt, therefore, to break the enemy centre and right wing he hurled his war-elephants against them. But the arrows and bullets from the other side proved too much even for the death-defying Sisodia heroes. In the personal combat between the Kachhwaha and Sisodia heroes many of the latter fell victims to the Muslim bullets and arrows shot indiscriminately at the Rajputs by fanatics like Badayuni. Raja Ram Shah Tanwar, who figured in front of the Rana in the thick of fighting in order to shield him from attack, was slain by Jagan Nath Kachhwaha. The imperial reserve now came to join the battle, and a rumour spread that Akbar had arrived in person to assist Man Singh. The Rana was now surrounded by the enemy and was about to be cut off, but Bida Jhala snatched the crown from Pratap's head, rushed to the front and cried out that he was the Rana. The enemy crowded round him and the pressure on Pratap was released. At this critical time some faithful soldiers seized the reins of the Rana's horse and took him safely to the rear of the line. Bida fell fighting loyally to save his master. At this the Rana's men lost heart and turned away from the field, leaving a large number of their dead behind. The battle of Haldighati was over. The loss on both the sides was very heavy, the Rana losing nearly half of his entire force. The imperial troops were so much exhausted that they could not think of pursuing the Rana, and passed the dreadful night in apprehension

of a surprise attack. In fact, they could not gauge the magnitude of their success until next morning. The Rana evacuated Gogunda, and Man Singh then made arrangements for its occupation.

Notwithstanding his best efforts. Man Singh did not succeed in reducing that fraction of Mewar (north-western region including Kumbhalgarh and Deosuri) which still remained in the hands of the Rana. He could not hold Gogunda for long owing to want of provisions and the hostility of the people. Neither his threats nor persuasion would bring Pratap round. The indomitable Sisodia king, though reduced to starvation on more than one occasion, did not condescend to lower his pride and acknowledge Akbar's suzerainty, much less to agree to a matrimonial alliance with him. Man Singh fell in disfavour with Akbar for his failure, and was recalled to court. It is erroneously supposed that Akbar, moved by sentiments of chivalrous regard for his great adversary, left him unmolested for the rest of his life. The truth, however, is that Akbar did not relax his attempt to reduce the Rana. But all his attempts failed, and Pratap succeeded in recovering possession of the greater part of his ancestral territory. The Rana's death on January 19, 1597, however, provided Akbar an opportunity to reduce Mewar to submission. But, as the emperor was then engaged in other quarters, he could not seize the opportunity. Although he sent more than one expedition against Amar Singh, the son and successor of Pratap, Mewar could not be conquered and annexed.

Reduction of Kabul, 1581

In 1480, many prominent Muslim officials in Bihar and Bengal, who were opposed to Akbar's policy of absolute religious toleration and were hard hit by his administrative, financial and military reforms, rose in revolt and formed a conspiracy to depose him and give the throne to his half brother, Mirza Muhammad Hakim of Kabul. Accustomed

to a preferential religious treatment, they could not brook Akbar's policy of placing the diverse faiths in the land on a footing of equality with Islam, and fancied that their religion was in danger. Mulla Muhammad Yazdi, the *qazi* of Jaunpur, promulgated an authoritative decree (*fatwa*) that rebellion against Akbar was a religious duty. The Qaqshal Turks, who had held prominent posts in Bengal, followed the example of their co-religionists in Bihar, who were the first to rebel, and read the *khutba* in Mirza Hakim's name. They besieged the governor, Muzaffar Khan, in Tanda and defeated an imperial army which was sent to reinforce Muzaffar Khan. The rebellion now spread over the whole of the two provinces. Akbar, rightly realising that the source of the real danger was his own brother, made suitable military preparations to proceed and attack Kabul, sending at the same time adequate troops to Bihar and Bengal to put down the rebels and to prevent them from proceeding to join Mirza Hakim. He took prompt action against the traitors at his court, who were in treasonable correspondence with his step-brother. He imprisoned some and put others, including their leader Shah Mansur, to death in order to strike terror into the hearts of the disaffected. Hakim, who had crossed the Indus and advanced to Lahore, was disappointed to find that contrary to the information conveyed to him, the Muslims of the Punjab did not even move their little finger to assist him. Before Akbar had reached Macchiwara on March 8, 1581, Mirza Hakim was on his hurried retreat towards Kabul. Akbar quickly reached the Indus and sent a force under Man Singh to occupy Kabul, himself following the Raja without loss of time. Hakim fled from Kabul to Ghurband and Akbar entered Kabul on August 10. The terrified Hakim sent messages of submission and was pardoned. But Akbar appointed his step-sister (and Mirza's real sister) Bakht-un-Nisa Begam governor of Kabul and returned to Fatchpur Sikri. After his

departure, Hakim took the *de facto* charge of the administration, but his sister continued to be the official governor. Mirza Hakim died in July 1585, and Kabul was then incorporated as a province of the empire. The rebels in Bihar and Bengal were defeated by Todar Mal and other generals and the rebellions in other parts were also suppressed.

The year 1581 has been described as the most critical year of Akbar's life since his assumption of authority in 1560. The Emperor's resourcefulness, tact and ability enabled him to get the better of his enemies and to emerge from the struggle more powerful than before.

Annexation of Kashmir, 1585

Akbar had for long cherished the ambition of reducing Kashmir to submission by diplomacy and failing that by force of arms. Though Yusuf Khan, the Sultan of Kashmir, sent his third son in 1581 and the elder one in 1585 to wait on Akbar, he had evaded appearing in person. With the object of overawing him into submission and also making arrangements for the incorporation of Kabul as a province of the empire, Akbar left Fatehpur Sikri for Lahore in the autumn of 1585. He reached Rawalpindi early in December and thence moved to Attock. He dispatched Zain Khan Kokaltash and Raja Birbal and Hakim Abdul Fateh to chastise the Yusufzai and Mohamand tribes of the frontier region, as they had become troublesome. But the imperial troops did not fare well in the battle that followed and Raja Birbal was killed. Akbar was much grieved and he censured Zain Khan and Abdul Fateh for their defeat and failure to recover Raja Birbal's body. Raja Todar Mal, who was now sent to avenge the defeat, reduced the tribesmen to submission. Man Singh, who was commissioned to join him, defeated the Afghans in a battle in the Khyber Pass. The tribesmen, though not thoroughly subdued, gave no further trouble to the government.

Simultaneously with the expedition against the tribesmen, Akbar made arrangements for the reduction of Kashmir and entrusted the work to Qasim Khan, Raja Bhagwant Das and some other commanders. The imperial army proceeded towards Srinagar early in 1586, but was disheartened owing to rain and snow and agreed to make peace with Sultan Yusuf Khan, who, feeling himself weak, met the imperial generals and sought for terms. Yusuf Khan recognised Akbar as his sovereign and agreed to the recitation of the *khutba* and the issuing of coins in the Emperor's name. He also consented to the appointment of imperial officers to take charge of the mint, saffron cultivation, manufacture of shawls and regulation of game in Kashmir. Akbar disappointed of the treaty, and when Sultan Yusuf Khan and his son Yaqub Khan came to wait on him, he ordered the Sultan to be arrested; but Yaqub Khan escaped to Srinagar and made preparations for resistance. Akbar thereupon sent an army against him which compelled him to surrender. Kashmir was now annexed to the empire and became a *sarkar* of the province of Kabul. Yusuf Khan was released after some time and appointed a *mansabdar* of 500.

Conquest of Sindh, 1591

Akbar had acquired the island fortress of Bhakkar as early as 1574. He now coveted the southern part of Sindh at the mouth of the Indus without which his supremacy over north-western India could not be considered as complete. Moreover, he wanted to use it as a base of operations against Kandhar, then in the possession of Shah Abbas of Persia. In 1590, the Emperor appointed Abdur Rahim, now ennobled with his father's title of *Khan Khanan*, governor of Multan, with instructions to conquer the principality of Thatta (lower Sindh) from its Turkoman ruler, Mirza Jani Beg. The latter fought two battles in defence of his country, but was defeated and compelled to surrender his

entire territory, including the fortresses of Thatta and Sehwan (1591). He entered the imperial service and was enrolled as a *mansabdar* of 3,000 and a member of *Din Ilahi*.

Conquest of Orissa, 1592

In 1590, Raja Man Singh, governor of Bihar, invaded Orissa and prepared to attack Qutulu Khan Lohani, who had set himself up as the ruler of that distant province. Qutulu Khan died before he could meet Man Singh in battle. His son, Nisar Khan, submitted after a feeble resistance, and was confirmed as governor. But two years later, he repudiated the treaty and seized the crown-lands of Puri and Jagannath. Raja Man Singh defeated and expelled the rebel. The province was now annexed to the empire, and became a part of the *suba* of Bengal.

Conquest of Baluchistan, 1595

In February 1595, Mir Masum was deputed to conquer Baluchistan, which was the only principality in Northern India that had not yet acknowledged Akbar's authority. The gifted general attacked the fortress of Sibi, north-east of Quetta, and compelled the Pani Afghans, who were defeated, to deliver the whole of Baluchistan, including Makran, the region near the coast, into the hands of the imperialists.

Acquisition of Kandhar, 1595

In April 1595, the Persian governor of Kandhar, Muzaffar Husain Mirza, who was not on good terms with the authorities at Tehran, peacefully delivered the powerful fortress into the hands of Shah Beg, an officer whom Akbar had deputed for the purpose. Muzaffar Husain Mirza was received with honour and appointed a *mansabdar* of 5,000 horse and given the *jagir* at Sambhal. The acquisition of Kandhar completed Akbar's conquest in

northern India, the whole of which, except a small fraction of Mewar, was now in his possession.

Conquest of Khandesh and a part of Ahmadnagar, 1593-1601 ; Akbar's Dakhin Policy

Even before he brought the whole of northern India in his possession and gave it political and administrative unity, Akbar had cherished the ambition of conquering all the four existing Sultanates of the Dakhin into which the old Bahmani kingdom had split. By a policy of military pressure and by diplomacy he was able to persuade Raja Ali Khan of Khandesh to acknowledge his suzerainty (1577). In August, 1591, he despatched four diplomatic missions severally to Khandesh, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golkunda, calling upon their rulers to recognise his suzerainty and pay him tribute. Raja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, whose territory lay immediately south of Akbar's empire, reaffirmed his allegiance and gave his daughter in marriage to Salim ; but those of the other three States politely rejected the offer. Accordingly, in 1593, Akbar commissioned Prince Murad, his second son, to reduce Ahmadnagar by force. Accompanied by Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, who was associated with him in the command, Murad besieged Ahmadnagar, which was heroically defended by the gallant Chand Bibi, Queen-Dowager of Bijapur and an aunt of the reigning king Muzzaffar of Ahmadnagar. Torn by dissensions, the imperial generals raised the siege and made peace in 1596, recognising the grandson of Burhan-ul-Mulk, named, Bahadur, then a child, as Sultan of Ahmadnagar, under the suzerainty of Akbar. The new Sultan ceded Berar to the empire and sent valuable presents to Agra.

The peace lasted for a short duration only. Very soon the Ahmadnagar government broke the terms of the treaty and attempted to recover Berar. In 1597, the Khan Khanan was obliged to renew operations. The imperialists gained an indecisive

victory. The Mughal cause suffered severely on account of dissensions between Murad and the *Khan Khanan*. Akbar, therefore, decided to recall both of them and to appoint Abul Fazl in their place. He sent Prince Daniyal, his third son, to take charge of the operations against Ahmadnagar and himself prepared to march in person to the Dakhin. Daulatabad fell before his arrival, in 1599. Then Ahmadnagar was besieged by Daniyal and captured in August 1600, but not before the heroic Chand Bibi had fallen to the dagger of an assassin. The young king Bahadur Nizam Shah was taken prisoner and sent to Gwalior; but the nobles of Ahmadnagar set up another puppet and continued to resist the Mughal arms.

Before the fall of Ahmadnagar, the King of Khandesh, Bahadur Shah, whose father, Raja Ali Khan, had died fighting on the side of his Mughal suzerain in a battle with Ahmadnagar, had repudiated the Mughal authority and prepared to defend himself in his strong fortress of Asirgarh. Akbar resolved to attack him. Early in 1599, he entered Khandesh, took possession of its capital, Burhanpur, and besieged the impregnable fortress of Asirgarh, which was well-provided with artillery, war-like stores and provisions. The siege continued for a long time and Abul Fazl was sent to supervise the operations and infuse vigour into the besiegers. The imperialists carried an important outwork which frightened Bahadur and he submitted to Akbar on December 21, 1600. The garrison continued to resist for a few days more, but surrendered the fortress on January 17, 1601. Khandesh was now annexed to the empire. King Bahadur was sent as prisoner to Gwalior and was granted a subsistence allowance of 4,000 *ashrafis* a year. Vincent Smith has charged Akbar with gross perfidy in his dealings with Bahadur; but, as Wolseley Haig has rightly pointed out King Bahadur was as much to blame as Akbar, for each strove to outwit the other. Nor was

Akbar guilty of putting Muqarrab, son of the commandant of the fort, to death, as some modern historians have wrongly supposed. The young man had committed suicide on account of the rebuke administered by his father.

The emperor appointed Daniyal as viceroy of the Mughal Deccan and left for Agra on April 21, 1601.

This was Akbar's last conquest.

Consolidation of the Conquests

Akbar invariably followed the policy of giving an organised administration to his conquests. As soon as a principality or a province was reduced to submission, he took steps to establish therein complete order and peace, and to appoint civil officers to carry out a revenue settlement, which was based on the principles of measurement and classification of the land. Religious toleration was extended to the newly conquered areas. Social, religious, as well as administrative reforms were introduced and the interest of the people, social, moral and material, was consulted. As will be shown hereafter, Akbar, unlike his predecessors, including Sher Shah, gave a uniform system of administration to all the provinces of his empire and paved the way for the establishment of a common nationality in the land.

REBELLIONS

Revolt of Abdullah Khan Uzbek, 1564

Most of the Mughal officials, who had long been in service from the time of Humayun, felt dissatisfied with Akbar's policy of centralisation. They wanted not only autonomy in their respective jurisdictions, but also semi-independent status with right and power to do as they liked. Adham Khan, Pir Muhammad and Khan Zaman had behaved, as if they were kings in their provinces. Abdullah Khan Uzbek, governor of Malwa, followed in their footsteps and prepared to rise in rebellion. In July 1564, Akbar proceeded to punish him. For a

fortnight, he was detained on the way by heavy rain on the bank of the Chambal. On his approach, Abdullah fled from Mandu, but Akbar pursued and defeated him. Abdullah's women and elephants fell into his hands. Qara Bahadur Khan was appointed governor of Malwa. After establishing friendly relations with Mubarak Shah II of Khandesh, whose daughter he married, and successfully persuading the ruler of Gujarat to banish the rebel, Abdullah, from his territory, Akbar returned to Agra in October, 1564.

The Uzbek Rebellion, 1564-67

Among the old nobility of Akbar's court, the Uzbeks formed a most influential and turbulent section. Their leaders were Khan Zaman (Ali Quli Khan) governor of Jaunpur, his brother Bahadur, their uncle Ibrahim Khan, Khan Alam (Iskandar Khan) governor of Awadh, and Abdullah Khan, who was recently driven out of Malwa. They held important assignments and commanded powerful bodies of troops. Khan Zaman and Khan Alam had ably assisted Bairam Khan and rendered valuable service in re-establishing the Mughal rule in northern India. Feeling that their services had not been adequately rewarded, they nursed a grievance against their young sovereign. Moreover, they disliked Akbar's policy of centralisation and his 'Persianised ways', and were filled with a desire to retain their semi-independent status and freedom to act as they liked. Their descent from a common stock and family connections, besides the common fancied grievance at the hands of the king, had made them resolve to sink or swim together. They rose in revolt and planned a campaign against Akbar. It was decided that Ibrahim and Khan Alam should attack Kanauj, while at the same time Khan Zaman and Bahadur should capture Manikpur. Khan Zaman and his brother defeated the royal troops and obtained possession of Manikpur. Khan Alam

and Ibrahim defeated another royal army in May, 1565. The situation was so menacing that Akbar was obliged to take the field in person. He made a surprise attack on Khan Alam near Lucknow and put him to flight. Khan Alam joined Khan Zaman, who was besieging Manikpur. But on hearing that Akbar had occupied Lucknow, they abandoned the siege and fled to the marshy land of Bahraich and from there withdrew to Hajipur in Bihar. The rebellion lasted for more than two years during the course of which Akbar thought it prudent to forgive the rebels more than once. But as they were not prepared to abandon their pretensions to a feudal aristocracy, he had to take the field again, and crush the Uzbegs finally. In June, 1567, Khan Zaman was killed in a battle near Kara on the Ganga, and the Uzbeg rebellion came to an end. Akbar was now free to centralise power in his own hands and reduce the old nobility to the status of mere officials whom he could appoint and dismiss at will.

Mirza Hakim's Invasion of India, 1566-67

Encouraged by the Uzbeg rebellion, the leaders of which were in communication with him, Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Akbar's step-brother and governor of Kabul, invaded the Punjab in the hope that he would be supported by the assignees in that province. He proceeded by way of Bhera to Lahore where he was opposed by Khan Kalan. On receipt of the news, Akbar set out from Agra on November 16, 1566, and, as he reached Delhi, Muhammad Hakim beat a hasty retreat. Akbar, however, continued his march and reached Lahore at the end of January, 1567. A contingent of troops was sent to pursue the fugitive; it returned after Hakim had crossed back to the other side of the Indus.

Rebellion of the Mirzas

While at Lahore, Akbar received reports of a rebellion of the Mirzas in the Sambhal and Azam-

pur districts. The rebels, Ibrahim Husain Mirza, Muhammad Husain Mirza, Masud Husain Mirza and Aqil Husain Mirza and their two nephews, Sikandar Mirza and Mahmud Mirza (Shah Mirza), who joined them, were descendants of Timur's second son, and were blood-relations of Akbar. Probably, their rebellion was due to their belief that, being connected by blood with the ruling family, they deserved a more handsome provision for their maintenance. Following the example of Muhammad Zaman Mirza and Muhammad Sultan Mirza of the time of Humayun, they obtained forcible possession of the crown-lands in their neighbourhood. Munim Khan defeated them and drove them into Malwa. But as they indulged in guerilla tactics and fled from place to place, they could not be completely reduced till 1573. The time coincided with the Uzbek rebellion and the latter's invitation to Mirza Hakim to make another attempt against Akbar. But as we have already seen, the Uzbeks suffered defeat and their leader, Khan Zaman, was killed in battle and his brother, Bahadur Khan, was executed. The rebellion of the Mirzas also came to an end almost simultaneously with the end of the Uzbek menace. The Mirzas were hunted down and expelled from Malwa whence they fled to Gujarat. They were finally beaten and exterminated when Akbar undertook his second expedition to that province in 1573. The last important rebellion of his nobles who had been closely connected with his family since the time of his father occurred in 1580, and was so widespread as to constitute a grave threat to Akbar's life and throne. But it was successfully crushed, as we have seen, in 1581, after which year the Emperor had no opposition to face from the old peers, their descendants and followers.

Policy towards the Rajputs

Akbar's treatment of the Rajputs was not the outcome of thoughtless sentiment or a mere chival-

rous regard for their valour, generosity and patriotism. It was the result of a deliberate policy, and was based on the principles of enlightened self-interest, recognition of merit, justice and fair play. Akbar had realised at an early age that his Muslim officials and followers, foreign mercenaries as they were, acted principally for their own ends and could not be absolutely depended upon. Almost from the day of his accession, he had to face rebels in his own camp and court. From Shah Abdul Mali, who displayed contumacy and refused to attend Akbar's coronation durbar (16th February, 1556) to Shah Mansur, who, though raised to the exalted office of finance minister, traitorously backed up Mirza Muhammad Hakim (1580), we have a long list of Muslim rebels against the authority of one to whom they owed their position and importance in the world. Even Bairam Khan rose against his sovereign (1560), though in a half-hearted fashion, and stained the record of his lifelong loyal services. Next, Maham Anaga proved to be highly unprincipled and selfish. Her son, Adham Khan, disregarded Akbar's authority (1561) and misappropriated most of the booty in Malwa, and, a little later, killed the prime minister, Atka Khan, and on being reprimanded, had the audacity to catch hold of Akbar's arms (1562). The rebellions of Asaf Khan I and Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1564, were followed by that of Khan Zaman, one of the highest nobles in the empire, who with his Uzbek kinsmen menaced (1565-67) Akbar's throne and life. Then occurred the rising of the Mirzas, Akbar's relatives, which lasted till after 1573, and recalled to memory the troubles which Humayun had to face at the hands of his unworthy brothers and relations (Mirzas). The rebellions of those very people on whom depended Mughal authority in a foreign land and over an alien people, and occurring, as they did, so frequently, convinced Akbar, while he was yet a boy, that the only way to perpetuate his power and dynasty

was to seek the support of the important political elements in the population of the country. Moreover, the Afghan opposition to the Mughals, whom the former considered as usurpers of their birth-right, had not died out. The men of this race still dominated Bihar, Bengal and Orissa to say nothing of their homeland in the frontier region and Kabul. Sher Khan, son of the late Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah, was preparing to overthrow the Mughal power in the eastern parts of the modern Uttar Pradesh (1561), and Sulaiman Karrani was fast becoming the leader of the Afghans in India. Akbar was shrewd enough to realise what his father and grandfather had failed to see that the Rajputs, who held large areas in their possession and were masters of legions and renowned for their valour and fidelity to their word, could safely be depended upon and converted into friends. Hence, he decided to seek their co-operation and use them as a counterpoise against his self-seeking Mughal, Uzbek, Persian and Afghan nobles and officials. In pursuance of this policy, he accepted the submission of Raja Bhar Mal of Amber (Jaipur), and welcomed a matrimonial alliance with that Kachhwaha ruling family, in January, 1562. He took Bhagwant Das and Man Singh into his service and soon discovered that they were more loyal and serviceable than most of his top-ranking Muslim followers. It was, in fact, only after he had tested the Kachhwaha loyalty and devotion that he decided to invite other Rajput chiefs in the land to accept him as their suzerain and join his service on footing of equality with the highest of his Muslim officials and nobles. He shrewdly guessed that, if left in the possession of their autonomous States and treated honourably, they would accept the offer. He was right. One after another, all the States of Rajasthan entered into alliance with him and were enrolled as *mansabdars*. But this result was not achieved without military demonstration and even fight. Merta

fell in 1562; Ranthambhor in 1568; in 1570 Marwar, Bikaner and Jaisalmer submitted without resistance. Other States in Rajasthan and Central India followed suit. Mewar alone disdainfully rejected the proposal and, in spite of a prolonged siege, during which its capital Chittor was lost, and almost continued warfare thereafter, it remained aloof even though the collateral branches of its ruling family which held the independent States of Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh, had submitted to Akbar in 1577. Akbar was generous enough to forget the resistance and even grim fighting offered by some of the Rajputs, and admitted them to the same privilege and honour in his service as he had shown to those who had submitted without fighting. Being peculiarly free from religious fanaticism, he, unlike the Sultans of Delhi, did not brand the Rajputs, as infidels or political inferiors. Nor did he, during the course of his campaigns in their lands, indulge in the sacrilegious policy of temple destroying and image breaking, of which his predecessors had been guilty. In fact, he looked upon the highest among them, who had entered into matrimonial alliances, as his relatives. The result was that the Rajputs, who had not only held aloof but fought stubbornly and consistently against the Turko-Afghan Sultans of Delhi for more than 350 years, became staunch supporters of the Mughal throne and a most effective instrument for the spread of Mughal rule in the country. They contributed freely and richly to the military, political, administrative, economic, social, cultural and artistic achievements of Akbar's reign. Their co-operation not only gave security and permanence to the Mughal rule, but also brought about an unprecedented economic prosperity and cultural renaissance in the country, and a synthesis of the Hindu and Muslim cultures, which is a priceless legacy of the Mughal rule to modern India.

CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION OF AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS AND POLICY

Akbar was born and brought up in comparatively liberal surroundings. His father was a Mughal *Sunni*, his mother a Persian *Shia*, and he first saw the light and lived for about a month in the house of a Hindu chief. Though orthodox in his religious views Humayun had to conform outwardly with the principles of *Shiaism* and his most loyal officer and commander, Bairam Khan, was a confirmed *Shia*. Bairam Khan who subsequently became Akbar's guardian and Protector, was responsible for moulding his conduct and shaping his policy. Akbar's most notable tutor, Abdul Latif, who was so liberal in his religious views as to be dubbed a *Sunni* in the *Shia* country of Persia and a *Shia* in the *Sunni* ridden northern India, taught him the principle of *Suleh-i-Kul* (universal peace) which Akbar never forgot. Thus, heredity and environment combined to influence Akbar's religious views, in the direction of liberalism. By nature he was incapable of religious fanaticism and though, after Bairam Khan's fall, he had, sometimes during the next few years, been persuaded to sanction measures of persecution against a few notable Muslim 'heretics', he never really gave evidence of narrow religious bigotry. Even before he was twenty, he abolished the pernicious practice of enslaving the prisoners of war and converting them to Islam. Profoundly religious in the correct sense of the term, he often pondered over the problems of life and death, and on completing his twentieth year he was seized with remorse caused by the difficulty of reconciling religion and politics.

“On the completion of my twentieth year,” said Akbar, “I experienced an internal bitterness and from the lack of spiritual provision for my last journey, my soul was seized with exceeding sorrow.” This spiritual awakening became responsible for the abolition of a tax, in 1563, on Hindu pilgrims visiting their holy shrines, in all the parts of his empire. Next year a more revolutionary measure was enacted. It was the abolition of the hated *jizya* or poll-tax on non-Muslims, which all previous Turko-Afghan Sultans and even his father and grandfather had thought it a religious duty to realise. Although this measure marked a fundamental departure in his religious policy, Akbar, nevertheless, in his personal life, continued for many years to be a good, though tolerant, Muslim. We have it on the testimony of the contemporary historian Badayuni that not only did Akbar say his daily five prayers and go through other observances of his religion, but in greatfulness to the Almighty for bestowing on him territory, wealth and power, he spent the early hours of dawn every day in meditating on Him and uttering *Ya Hu ! Ya Hadi !* etc. in orthodox Muslim fashion. He sought the company of Muslim religious men and every year devoutly performed the pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Shaikh Muin-ud-din Chishti at Ajmer. Possessed of an inquisitive bent of mind, he desired to understand the principles of his religion. With this object in view, early in 1575, he erected a building at Fatehpur Sikri, entitled *Ibadat Khana* (House of Worship), in which regular religious discussions were held on Thursday evenings. In the beginning, the debates were confined to the Muslims : Shaikhs, Sayyids, the *ulema* and the Muslim nobles alone were invited to attend the meetings. The orthodox *Sunni* party headed by Mulla Abdullah of Sultanpur, entitled Makhdum-ul-Mulk, and Shaikh Abdun Nabi, the chief *sadr* took a prominent part in the discussions. But as it was divided against itself, it soon lost its influence

with Akbar. Makhdum-ul-Mulk and Abdun Nabi quarrelled among themselves on fundamental questions of Islamic theology and openly exhibited unworthy intolerance to each other's views. Some of the learned scholars called their opponents names and all imputed motives to one another. "All at once one night," writes Badayuni, "the veins of the neck of the *ulema* of the age swelled up and a horrid noise and confusion ensued. His Majesty got very angry at their rude behaviour." Such occurrences in the House were by no means uncommon. On hearing that Haji Ibrahim had issued a *fatwa* legalising the use of yellow and red dress, "Mir Adil, Sayyid Muhammad, in the imperial presence called him an accursed wretch, abused him and lifted his stick to strike him..." Their irresponsible behaviour and quarrels, their inability to explain satisfactorily the fundamental doctrines of Islam, and their personal greed and unworthy conduct convinced Akbar that truth must be sought outside their bickerings.

Now began the second stage in the evolution of Akbar's religious ideas. His belief in orthodox Islam was shaken. He threw open the debates to members of other faiths, such as Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians and Christians. On June 22, 1579, he mounted the pulpit at the principal mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, and read the *khutba*, in verse composed by the Poet Laureate, Faizi. In September, Shaikh Mubarak, the father of Faizi and Abul Fazl, produced at the Emperor's instance, a formal document (*Mahzar*) giving Akbar, the supreme authority of an arbiter in all controversial causes concerning Islam in the country, whether they were ecclesiastical or civil. This document was signed by all important Muslim divines, including Makhdum-ul-Mulk and Abdun Nabi. The following is the text of the document :

"Whereas Hindustan is now become the centre

of security and peace, and the land of justice and benevolence, so that numbers of the higher and lower orders of the people, and especially learned men possessed of divine knowledge, and subtle jurists who are guides to salvation and travellers in the path of the diffusion of learning have immigrated to this land from Arabia and Persia, and have domiciled themselves here ; now we, the principal *ulema*, who are not only well-versed in the several departments of the law and the principles of jurisprudence, and well-acquainted with the edicts based on reason and testimony, but are also known for our piety and honest intentions, have duly considered the deep meaning, first of the verse of the *Quran* "Obey God and obey the Prophet, and those who are invested with authority among you" ; and, secondly, of the genuine Tradition, "Surely the man who is dearest to God on the Day of Judgment is the just leader ; whosoever obeys the *Amir* obeys Me, and whosoever rebels against him rebels against Me" ; and thirdly, of several other proofs based on reason, and testimony ; and we have agreed that the rank of Just King is higher in the eyes of God than that of *Mujtahid*.

"Further we declare that the King of Islam, the Asylum of Mankind, the Commander of the Faithful, Shadow of God in the world, Abul-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, *Padishah-i-Ghazi* (whose kingdom God perpetuate) is a most just, and wise king, with a knowledge of God.

"Should, therefore, in future, religious questions arise regarding which the opinions of the *Mujtahids* are at variance, and His Majesty, in the penetrating understanding and clear wisdom, be inclined to adopt, for the benefit of the nation and in the interests of good order, any of the conflicting opinions which exist on that point, and should he issue a decree to that effect, we do hereby agree that such a decree shall be binding on all his people.

"Should His Majesty see fit to issue a new order in conformity with some text of the *Quran*, and calculated to benefit the nation, all shall be bound by it, and opposition to it will involve damnation in the next world, and loss of religious privileges and property in this.

"This document has been written with honest intentions and for the glory of God and the propagation of Islam, and has been signed by us, the principal *ulema* of the Faith and leading Theologians in the month of Rajab, A.H. 987 (August-September, 1579)."

The above document, which has been miscalled Infallibility Decree, gave Akbar the authority to adopt any one of the conflicting opinions of the Muslim jurists, and also that of adopting any line of conduct and policy in non-controversial matters, provided it was in consonance with a verse of the *Quran*. He thus appropriated for himself what had hitherto been the special privilege of the *ulema*, and more particularly of the chief *sadr*. Henceforth he became armed with religious authority over his Muslim subjects. It will not be fair to say that Akbar became Pope as well as King, as modern writers like Smith and Wolseley Haig have wrongly affirmed.

Although religious discussion in the *Ibadat Khana* continued, Akbar now arranged for private meetings with scholars and holy men of various faiths. After his loss of faith in *Sunni* orthodoxy, he turned to *Shia* scholars. Hakim Abul Fateh, a man of exceedingly winning address from Gilan, acquired a great ascendancy in Akbar's estimation. Mulla Muhammad Yazdi, another *Shia* divine, became his intimate associate, and tried to make the Emperor a *Shia*. But Akbar found no consolation in the *Shia* faith and turned to *Sufism*. Shaikh Faizi and Mirza Sulaiman of Badakhshan, reputed to be '*Sahib-i-Hal*' initiated him into the mysteries of *Sufi* principles

and practices, like direct communion with God. But though Akbar was a mystic by nature and beheld 'visions' more than once, he found *Sufism* too inadequate for his purpose. So he attempted to seek consolation in other religions, freely mixing with Hindu *Sannyasis*, Christian missionaries and Zoroastrian priests. So intense was his curiosity to know the truth that he denied himself rest even at bed time and held discussions with the Brahmin scholars, Purushottam and Devi, and reputed theologians of other faiths in the balcony of his bed-room during the night. But each of these faiths, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity, failed to appeal exclusively to his expanding soul.

A true rationalist, Akbar carried on his investigation into the truth in a scientific spirit. "Day and night," writes Badayuni, "people did nothing but enquire into and investigate the profound secrets of science, the subtilities of revelation, the curiosities of history, and the wonders of Nature...His Majesty has passed through the various phases and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs and has collected everything which people can find in books, *with a talent for selection and a spirit of enquiry opposed to every (Islamic) principle.*" The result of his life-long enquiry was the conviction that "there were sensible men in all religions and abstemious thinkers.....If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion or creed like Islam which was comparatively new and scarcely a thousand years old."¹

Akbar's rationalism had long before this time shaken his belief in orthodox Islam. He rejected the Islamic doctrines of Resurrection and Judgment, and brushed aside revelation. He would not believe

¹ *Ain*, Vol. I, p. 179.

how any one could go to Heaven, have a long conversation with God and come back to find his bed still warm. He adopted many Hindu and Parsee beliefs and customs, such as belief in the doctrines of Transmigration of the Soul and Sun worship. Thus began his apostasy from Islam. Many a modern historian holds the view that Akbar lived and died a Muslim. The present writer, however, finds himself unable to agree with them. Islam, unlike Hinduism, is a definite creed, and one who does not believe in the five fundamentals of that religion, namely, faith in *Kalima* (unity of God and prophetship of Muhammad), five daily prayers, fast of Ramzan, *Zakat* and *Haj*, ceases to be a Muslim. The belief in the doctrine of *Karma*, the theory of transmigration of the soul and in the worship of the Sun, though conceived only as a source of light, and the conviction that every religion is based on truth, are opposed to the fundamental Islamic axiom that the Muslim religion alone has the monopoly of truth and all that was said and prescribed by former prophets has been cancelled by the latest and greatest of them, namely Muhammad. He looked upon Muhammad as a prophet, not *the* Prophet. Moreover, we have no contemporary recorded evidence to show that Akbar continued to have faith in the religion of his birth. Botelho and Peruschi who held that view were neither contemporary writers nor even secondary authorities and based their conclusions only on Jesuit writings. Akbar's letter to Abdullah Khan Uzbek written in 1586 wherein he described himself a Muslim, need not be taken seriously. It was a sheer diplomatic correspondence and not an honest statement of fact. It was of course difficult to repudiate completely all elements of Muslim culture in which he had his birth and early training. Most of these he retained till the end.

Din Ilahi

Dissatisfied with tradition and authority, Akbar

prescribed human reason as the sole basis of religion and extended complete religious toleration to every creed in the empire. He was grieved to see narrow-minded religious zealots preaching hatred against one another. In his anxiety to do away with religious discord in the empire, he made an attempt to bring about a synthesis of the various religions known to him, and styled it *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* or Divine Monotheism. It was a socio-religious order or brotherhood, designed to cement diverse communities in the land. It was based on the principle of universal toleration (*Suleh-i-Kul*) and comprised good points of all the religions investigated by the Emperor himself. It believed in the unity of God and some of the important Hindu, Jain and Parsee doctrines found a prominent place in it.

According to Badayuni and the Jesuit writer Bartoli, Akbar, after his return from the Kabul campaign, convened in 1582 a counsel of his principal courtiers and officers and formally promulgated the *Din Ilahi*. He referred to the discord among the diverse creeds and emphasised the necessity of bringing them all into one "in such fashion that they should be both 'one' and 'all' with the great advantage of not losing what is good in any one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another." All the courtiers except Raja Bhagwant Das agreed. Some of the courtiers enrolled themselves as members of the organisation. The order had a ceremonial of its own. When a person desired to be a member, he was introduced by Abul Fazl, who acted as its high priest. Then the man with his turban in hand, put his head at the feet of the Emperor. The Emperor raised him up, placed the turban back on his head and gave him the *shast* (his own likeness) upon which were engraved God's name and the phrase *Allahu Akbar*. The order had its own salutations, which were *Allahu Akbar* and *Jall-e-Jalal-e-Hu*. The members had to give a dinner in their life-

time as against the old practice of holding a banquet in honour of a dead person. They were required to give a party on the anniversary of their birth and to practise charity. They had to abstain from eating meat as far as possible, and from using the vessels of butchers, fishermen and bird-catchers. They were not to marry old women or minor girls. They were expected to sacrifice property, life, honour and religion in the service of the Emperor. These were the four grades of devotion, and one who sacrificed one of these four things was supposed to have possessed one degree of devotion. One who sacrificed two things, possessed two degrees of devotion, and so on.

The order had a few thousand members. But most of the prominent men in the empire did not enrol themselves, and Birbal was the only notable Hindu to accept it. *Din Ilahi* perished with Akbar's death, though Jahangir continued to make disciples after Akbar's fashion. Both Smith and Wolseley Haig have condemned Akbar for promulgating what they have termed a religion of his own. The former historian went to the length of saying that "The Divine Faith was a monument of Akbar's folly, not of his wisdom." The condemnation is unjust. Akbar's highest political object was the fusion of Hinduism and Islam and the establishment of cultural as well as political unity in the empire. The innovation was the outcome of his policy of universal toleration and a brilliant testimony to his national idealism. It was inevitable that a fanatic like Bada-yuni and ardent Portuguese missionaries who entertained the sure hope of converting Akbar to Christianity but had failed to do so, should have become thoroughly dissatisfied and found fault with the tolerant king. There is little evidence to show that Akbar had recourse to compulsion or bribery to secure adherents of the *Din Ilahi*. Nor is it fair to hold merely on the testimony of the bigoted Badayuni and the disappointed Jesuit missionaries that Akbar

indulged in the persecution of Islam. Akbar, no doubt, fancied himself of be the religious as well as the temporal head of his people. His conception of kingship was patriarchal in character and he considered himself to be the father of his subjects. Naturally, therefore, he arrogated to himself the position of the religious as well as the temporal head of the Indian people.

Akbar and Christianity

A keen student of comparative religions, Akbar sent for Portuguese missionaries from Goa to be able to make a close study of the doctrines of Christianity. In response to his invitation three Christian missions visited his court at different dates and stayed with him long enough to explain to the Emperor the principles and practices of their religion. The first mission consisting of Rudolf Aquiviva, Antonio Monserrate and Henriquez (a converted Persian) reached Fatehpur Sikri on February 19, 1580 and stayed with Akbar till April 1582. The second mission, consisting of Edward Leiton and Christopher de Vaga lived at the court from 1591 to 1592. The third mission, consisting of Jerome Xavier, Emmanuel Pinheiro and Benedict de Goes reached Lahore where Akbar happened to have his court in May 1595 and its head remained at the court till after Akbar's death in 1605. As the Emperor was desirous of acquiring as complete a knowledge of the principles of Christianity as he could, he not only behaved like an apt pupil but also showed reverence to the images of Jesus, Mary and the Apostles, and often attended the Chapels and other ceremonies held by the Portuguese Fathers. He allowed them to build churches at Agra and Lahore, to perform worship openly, to celebrate their festivals, and even to convert Hindus and Muslims to Christianity. Besides treating the missionaries as first class State guests and giving them every comfort and facility, Akbar bore all their ex-

penses. He allowed his sons to learn the Portuguese language and to acquire a knowledge of Christianity from the missionaries. His conduct and attention made the missionaries think that Akbar was well on the way of becoming a Christian. They sent highly exaggerated and even false reports of their success to their superiors at Goa and Lisbon, to the effect that Akbar had banished Islam from his kingdom, converted mosques into stables, and even prohibited people from being named Muhammad and Ahmad. Not long after, however, they discovered that the Emperor had no greater desire to embrace Christianity than Hinduism, Jainism or Zoroastrianism. The disappointed missionaries wrongly attributed it to his vanity and claim to prophetship, and to his inability to abandon his numerous wives and limit himself to only one as enjoined by Christianity. The silly gossip transmitted by the Portuguese fanatics has been credited with truth by many a modern European writer. V. A. Smith and Wolseley Haig presume, without reason, that Akbar had a better opinion of Christianity than of any other religion examined by him and that his political difficulties prevented him from embracing it. The fact however, is that a rationalist as he was, Akbar would not believe in a religion that was based on mere revelation and authority.

Akbar and Jainism

Jainism exercised even a more profound influence on the thought and conduct of Akbar than Christianity. He seems to have come into contact with Jain scholars quite early, owing probably to his alliance with the ruling families of Rajasthan, then the home of Jainism, and in 1568 he is said to have arranged a religious disputation between two Jain scholars representing two rival schools of thought. In 1582, he invited one of the greatest living Jain divines, Hiravijaya Suri of Tapa Gachha, from Gujarat to explain to him the principles of his reli-

gion. He was received with all possible honour and so impressed Akbar by his profound learning and ascetic character that the Emperor practically gave up meat diet, released many prisoners and prohibited slaughter of animals and birds for many days in the year. Hiravijaya Suri remained at the court for two years, was given the title of *Jagat Guru*, and was placed by Abul Fazl among the twenty-one top-ranking learned men at Akbar's court, supposed to be acquainted with *the mysteries of both worlds*. Subsequently, several other Jain scholars visited the Emperor, prominent among them being Shanti Chandra, Vijaya Sena Suri, Bhanu Chandra Upadhyaya, Harsha-Sar and Jayasoma Upadhyaya. A few Jain teachers of note continued to reside permanently at the court. In 1591, the Emperor having heard of the virtues and saintly eminence of Jin Chandra Suri of Khartar Gachha school invited him to the court. Travelling from Cambay, on foot, like other Jain monks, he reached Lahore in 1591 and was respectfully received by the Emperor. Like Hiravijaya Suri he refused to accept costly gifts and presents and explained to Akbar the doctrines of Jainism with so much success that the Emperor was highly gratified and conferred upon him the title of *Yuga Pradhan*. Jin Chandra Suri spent the four months of the rainy season at Lahore and in 1592, accompanied Akbar to Kashmir. He left Lahore in 1593. His influence on Akbar proved to be as profound and lasting as that of Hiravijaya Suri. The third and last Jain mission was headed by Vijaya Sen Suri who stayed at court from 1593 to 1595, and left a few of his disciples with the Emperor while taking leave of departure in the middle of 1595.

The teachings of the Jain monks (*munis*) produced a remarkable change in Akbar's life. He gave up hunting of which he had been so fond in his early days, and abstained almost wholly from meat diet.

He restricted the slaughter of animals and birds; prohibiting it completely for more than half the days in the year. He even laid down the penalty of death for taking animals' life on prohibited days. *Farman*s were issued to all governors and local officers to abide strictly by the imperial injunctions.

Akbar and Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism appealed to Akbar even more than Jainism. As early as 1573, he made at Surat his acquaintance with Dastur Mahyarji Rana of Navsari, the greatest Zoroastrian priest of the age. In 1578 he invited him to the court and learnt from him the doctrines and practices of the Parsee religion. Mahyarji Rana took a prominent part in religious discussions held at the House of Worship and impressed Akbar so favourably that he adopted some of the practices of the Zoroastrian faith. Dasturji was rewarded by a grant of 200 bighas of land as subsistence allowance with the right to bequeath it to his son. After more than a year's stay at the court the priest returned to Surat (1579). Akbar adopted several practices of the Parsee religion. A sacred fire was prepared according to the Parsee rites and permanently preserved at the palace under the charge of Abul Fazl. The Emperor began to show reverence to the Sun, light and fire. When lamps were lighted in the evening, the whole court was required to rise in reverence. Akbar performed sun worship by prostrating before it. He celebrated Persian festivals, and adopted the ancient Persian calendar.

Akbar and Hinduism

Probably, Hindu philosophical thought influenced Akbar much more than any other single religion so meticulously examined by him. It was not necessary to invite missions of Hindu scholars and saints, as he had from the very beginning been in touch with them and was acquainted with many

Hindu beliefs and practices. But as Akbar was anxious to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the principles and doctrines of that religion as given in the *shrutis* and *smritis*, he associated himself with prominent Hindu scholars, notable among them being Purushottam and Devi. They were drawn up to the balcony of the private apartments of the royal palace during the night in order to explain to the Emperor the mysteries of Hindu religion. The Emperor adopted many Hindu beliefs and practices, such as the Transmigration of the Soul and the doctrine of *Karma*. He adopted the Hindu way of life and began to celebrate many Hindu festivals, such as *Raksha Bandhan*, *Dasehra*, *Dewali* and *Basant*. Sometimes, he would put the Hindu paint mark (*tilak*) on his forehead. In conformity with the Hindu practice, he began to appear every morning before his subjects at *jharokha darshan* and in many respects began to act like a Hindu king. On his mother's death he shaved himself clean and observed mourning in Hindu fashion. Had the Hindu pandits and princes been broad-minded enough to accept him as member of their faith and had they made an attempt to rid Hinduism of idolatry and Hindu society of caste system, Akbar would probably have embraced Hinduism. It is a pity that our forbears of the second half of the 16th century betrayed reluctance to receive even Akbar as a member of their creed. Notwithstanding this prejudice, not only the rank and file among the Hindus but even their scholars and chiefs looked upon the great Emperor as one of themselves, and invented a story to account for his leanings towards Hinduism. The tradition is recorded in the pages of Mur-taza Husain Bilgrami's *Hadiqat-ul-Aqalim*, and the present writer heard it also from his father who gave the story in detail. It is related that in his previous life Akbar was a Hindu anchorite, entitled Mukand Brahmachari, who was supposed to have undertaken a religious penance (*tap*) at Prayag so that he might

be born a powerful Kshatriya king and exterminate Islam from India. But as luck would have it, he was, owing to a mistake in the performance of the *tap*, born a Muslim. Nevertheless, in view of his pre-natal heritage, Akbar acted like a Hindu monarch that he was so anxious to be, and served the interest of Hindu religion and culture. Many a Hindu would not have his breakfast without having seen the Emperor's face (*darshan*) in the morning. Some flattering pandits went further and sought to establish that Akbar was the king of the world and the fountain-head of religion. Akbar repaid the compliment by trying to assimilate Hindu thought and by conforming to the Hindu mode of life.

Akbar not a Religious Hypocrite

In spite of his religious vagaries, Akbar was not a hypocrite as has often been represented by appointed missionaries and fanatics of various creeds. He was undoubtedly a sincere enquirer of the truth. The testimony of Badayuni that he spent his morning time in meditation of God at Fatehpur Sikri and that he was a sincere Musalman upto 1578 has already been quoted. Abul Fazal informs us that the Emperor's spacious heart was grieved to see narrow creeds preaching hatred against one another. He would often ask : "Have the religious and worldly tendencies no common ground?" (*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 162). Akbar, after he had ceased to be a Muslim, performed private devotion four times a day, at sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight, spending a considerable time over them. These devotions consisted largely, in his later days, in reverence to the sun, fire and light. Jahangir declares in his autobiography that his father "never for a moment forgot God." (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 37). Besides these formal religious exercises, Akbar's whole life presented a continuous attempt at search after the relations between God and man and many of his Happy Sayings prove beyond the shadow of a doubt his faith in the

existence of God and his piety in the correct sense of the term. "There is no need," he observes, "to discuss the point that a vacuum in Nature is impossible. God is Omnipresent." "There exists a bond between the Creator and the creature which is not expressible in language." "That which is without form, cannot be seen whether in sleeping or waking, but it is apprehensible by force of imagination. To behold God in vision is, in fact, to be understood in this sense." (*Ain*, Vol. III, p. 380). Many such quotations can be given, but the above will suffice to show that Akbar was pre-eminently a religious man. Like the great ancient Hindu King Janak, who had earned the title of *Raj Rishi*, Akbar always acted on the maxim that one could be truly religious and yet could at the same time discharge his worldly duties with success. He used to say that even when engaged in earthly work, one should have constant thought of God. Such an attitude of mind was not only desirable but also feasible. He used to illustrate his point by giving an example of Indian women who would go out in batches to fetch water from rivers or tanks, place upon their heads, one upon the other, two or three pitchers, laugh and joke among themselves, and yet would not allow a drop of water to fall.

Rebellion of Prince Salim, 1599-1604

The later years of Akbar's life were clouded by anxiety caused by the unbecoming conduct and rebellion of his eldest son, his erstwhile darling Shaikho Baba, better known as Prince Salim, who succeeded his father as Emperor Jahangir. He was the child of many a prayer and was born of the Kachhwaha princess, the daughter of Bhar Mal of Amber, at the hermitage of Shaikh Salim Chishti of Fatehpur Sikri, on August 30, 1569. Akbar was so happy that he fulfilled a vow made at his birth by performing a pilgrimage, on foot, to the mausoleum

of Shaikh Muin-ud-din Chishti of Ajmer. Yet this very child, who was brought up with all possible care and affection, rose into rebellion on attaining maturity and endeavoured to seize the throne from his great father. Contrary to Akbar's desire and hope, Salim developed into a headstrong and ease-loving youth. In 1599, while the Emperor was preparing for an expedition against King Bahadur of Khandesh, Salim was appointed governor of Ajmer and was charged with the task of reducing Rana Amar Singh of Mewar, who, in conformity with the heroic tradition of his house, was gallantly waging an unequal struggle in defence of his ancestral dominion. Salim shunned an arduous campaign in the hills and jungles of Mewar, and failed to do anything against the Rana. Akbar became angry and began to show preference for his third son Daniyal, the second one, named Murad, having died of *delirium tremens*, on May 12, 1599. Abul Fazl, who disliked Salim's sloth and softness also exerted his influence against the prince. For these reasons Salim, who was tired of waiting for the throne, grew disaffected and decided to raise the standard of rebellion. He seized the immense wealth of Mir Bakhshi Shabaz Khan Kambu, a nobleman who had died at Ajmer, and hastened towards Agra, *en route* to Allahabad. Avoiding his grand-mother, who had advanced from Agra to see him and advise him to give up his rebellious intentions, Salim hastily crossed the Yamuna, proceeded to Allahabad and captured the royal treasure from Bihar amounting to Rs. 30 lakhs. He appointed his own officers in the provinces of Allahabad, Awadh and Bihar and began to act like an independent ruler. Akbar, then engaged in the siege of Asirgarh in Khandesh, pretended to disbelieve the news of his son's rebellion and wrote to him to behave. Salim sent an evasive reply, but continued to act as before. Next, the Emperor sent Salim's classmate, Sharif, to Allahabad to advise the prince to give up his evil

designs, but the prince won him over and appointed him his minister.

After the fall of Asirgarh, Akbar appointed Daniyal viceroy of the Dakhin, which consisted of the *Subas* of Khandesh and Berar and a part of Ahmadnagar, with its capital at Daulatabad, and himself set out on his return journey to Agra to take suitable steps against Salim. He reached the capital on August 23, 1602, and opened negotiations with his son. But the latter's demands were so extravagant that they could not be complied with. Akbar's policy of mild remonstrance, however, succeeded inasmuch as the rebellious prince, who had advanced with a big force as far as Etawah, returned to Allahabad. He, however, refused to accept the governorship of Bengal and Orissa and struck, it is said, coins in his own name. Akbar now sent for his ablest and best friend Abul Fazl from the Dakhin to consult him regarding the measures to be taken against Salim. The prince, however, had Abul Fazl murdered, as the latter reached the vicinity of Narwar, by a rebellious Bundela chief, Bir Singh Deva of Orchha, on August 19, 1602. Akbar was filled with grief and rage and ordered Bir Singh to be captured and put to death. But the Bundela chief escaped and lived to enjoy the favours of Jahangir. Salima Begum, his step-mother, now interceded for the rebel prince and was allowed to visit Allahabad. She succeeded in persuading Salim to Agra and submit to his father. The prince was conducted by his grand-mother into Akbar's presence. He placed his forehead on his father's feet and with tears in his eyes confessed his guilt and begged for his royal forgiveness. The Emperor, who had no choice, pardoned him, raised him up, embraced him and accepted his presents which consisted of 12,000 gold mohurs and 770 elephants. This took place in February 1603. In October, Salim was directed to lead an expedition against Mewar. He proceeded

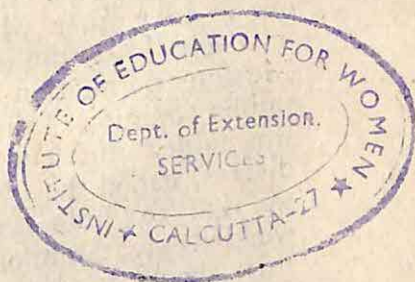
as far as Fatehpur Sikri and then requested permission to return to Allahabad in order to bring sufficient artillery for the campaign. Aware of the fact that Salim was averse to undertaking an expedition into Rajputana, Akbar granted his request. At Allahabad the prince became a confirmed drunkard and committed acts of revolting cruelty. Sometime in 1603 his first wife, sister of Man Singh and mother of Khusrau, succumbed to an overdose of opium taken in consequence of his ill-treatment, which brought about a complete estrangement between him and Man Singh. He flayed alive a news-writer who had reported his misconduct to Akbar. He beat one of his own servants to death and emasculated another belonging to his father. Furiously enraged Akbar proceeded towards Allahabad to chastise Salim, but had to return, on the first occasion owing to the grounding of his boat, next time owing to excessive rain and finally due to the serious illness of his mother who died on September 10, 1604, aged 77 years. Salim felt that Akbar was determined to use force and that he had no chance against his father in an open show-down. Akbar, too, was unnerved on account of his mother's death and because of the persistent news that his third son Daniyal was fast sinking in the Dakhin. He must, therefore, have longed for Salim's return to a sense of duty. The prince visited Agra on November 16 with the double object of offering his condolences to his father on the demise of his grand-mother, and of being at hand in case he should collapse on account of the shock of his mother's death. The Emperor betrayed no sign of displeasure when the prince paid his respects at the public audience, but afterwards he had him arrested and brought before him in the inner apartments of the palace. Then he rebuked him for his misdeeds, slapped him in the face and imprisoned him in a bath-room under the charge of Raja of Salivahan who was a physician of note, pro-

bably because the Emperor believed that the prince was suffering from a mental malady and was, therefore, in need of medical treatment. His principal followers were arrested and imprisoned. After ten days' confinement, during which he was deprived of liquor and opium, the prince was released and assigned suitable quarters for his residence. Salim submitted and resigned himself to his father's will, thinking that if he misbehaved, the Emperor would nominate his son Khusrau as his heir-apparent and deprive him of his birthright. The fear was not groundless, as he had so much discredited himself that some of the prominent nobles, such as, Man Singh and Khan Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, were openly supporting Khusrau who was then seventeen years of age and quite promising and popular. Salim humbly accepted the governorship of the Western Provinces, which had for some time been vacant on account of Daniyal's death (March 11, 1605). But he sent his deputies to conduct the government of the provinces, himself residing at Agra till his father's death.

Death of Akbar, 25-26 October, 1605

Akbar fell ill on October 3, 1605, his trouble being dysentery or some kind of diarrhoea. His condition grew worse owing to embittered relations between Salim and the latter's son Khusrau and the intrigues of the nobles who became divided into two factions, one supporting Salim and the other Khusrau. It is said that Man Singh and Aziz Koka wanted to arrest Prince Salim and to secure the throne for Khusrau. The Emperor's physician Hakim Ali failed to diagnose the trouble correctly and for eight days refrained from prescribing any medicine. Then he checked the patient's dysentery by administering strong astringent. This brought fever and strangury. On October 21, his condition became worse and he nominated Salim as his successor. That day Salim visited him, and, as the Emperor could no longer

speak, he made a sign to the prince to put on the Imperial turban and to gird himself with the sword of Humayun. There was a recurrence of dysentery and Akbar died at midnight of October 25-26, 1605. According to Botelho, he died a Muslim ; but there is no authentic evidence to support this view. Akbar was past speech during the last five days of his life and there is nothing on record to show that he recanted what some prejudiced writers have called his 'error'. His funeral was performed in accordance with Muslim rites and he was buried at Sikandra, five miles from Agra.



CHAPTER V

ADMINISTRATION

Theory of Kingship

Like his religious policy, Akbar's theory of kingship was the result of gradual evolution. During the early years of reign, the conception of his position and duty was that of an orthodox Muslim monarch. He was then the commander of the faithful (*Amir-ul-Mominin*) and defender and missionary of Islam, bound to carry out God's will as expressed in the Quran, and responsible to Him only. Like other Muslim monarchs, he was at least in theory subordinate to the wishes of the entire Muslim population (*millat*) in the empire. The public opinion of the Muslim brotherhood or *millat* was guided and controlled by the Muslim learned divines, called the *ulema*, who consequently claimed the right to influence the State policy, and who wielded great influence. Akbar sought to remove this check to his will and became the supreme authority over his Muslim subjects without being controlled either by the *ulema* or the *millat*. He attained this object by promulgating, as we have seen, the so-called Infallibility Decree (*Mahzar*) in September, 1579. The *ulema* gave Akbar in writing the authority to accept any of the conflicting interpretations of the law, which in his opinion was likely to be beneficial to the State, and also to adopt any line of action for the benefit of his subjects, provided he could quote in support of such an action a verse from the Quran. This in practice meant uniting ecclesiastical authority with that of secular power in his person. He had felt that the separation

of these two authorities had weakened the State. The next logical step was to establish his claim to be an impartial ruler of all his people, non-Muslims as well as Muslims. This implied the establishment of a common citizenship on the basis of complete toleration to the non-Muslims and their association in the administration on equal terms with Muslims. Such a policy was sure to bring him into clash with the orthodox *Sunni ulema* and the Muslim nobility who had enjoyed a privileged position in the State. These two classes combined and raised the standard of rebellion. But Akbar with the support of the Rajputs and Persians and the tacit acquiescence of the bulk of the *Sunni* population, emerged triumphant from the contest. The episode convinced him that the right course for him was to disregard the narrow basis of Islamic theory of kingship and to build up a new one based on the essential equality and welfare of diverse creeds and communities in the empire. The result of this conviction was the theory of divine origin of monarchy so ably propounded by his scholarly secretary, Abul Fazl, who sought to prove that the king was something more than an average human being. He was God's representative on earth and His shadow (*Zill-i-Alhi*) and greater knowledge and wisdom were given to him than to any other human being.

"Kingship is a gift of God," writes Abul Fazl, "and is not bestowed till many thousand grand requisites have been gathered in an individual. Race and wealth and the assembling of a mob are not enough for this great position." (*Akbarnama*, Vol. II, p. 421). Akbar maintained, "The very sight of the kings has been held to be a part of divine worship. They have been styled conventionally as the shadow of God (*Zill-i-Alhi*), and indeed to behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator." The king, according to Akbar, must be the best well-wisher and guardian of his subjects. He must be just, impartial

and benevolent. He should look upon his subjects as his children and work day and night for their welfare. "Divine worship in monarchs," observes Akbar, "consists in their justice and good administration." "Tyranny is unlawful in everyone, specially in a sovereign who is the guardian of the world." Akbar believed that the king must be absolutely tolerant to every creed and must establish universal peace in his dominions. After enumerating the qualities that an ideal monarch should possess, Abul Fazl concludes: "In spite of these qualities, he cannot be fit for this lofty office, if he does not inaugurate universal peace (toleration). If he does not regard all conditions of humanity and all sects of religion with the single eye for favour and not be mother to some and be step-mother to others, he will not become fit for the exalted dignity." (*Akbar-nama*, Vol. II, p. 421). Akbar expresses the same view in a letter to Shah Abbas of Persia in which he writes that "divine mercy attaches itself to every form of creed and supreme exertions must be made to bring oneself into the ever vernal flower-garden of 'peace with all' (*Suleh-i-Kul*). In summing up his views about Akbar's theory of kingship, Abul Fazl writes: "No dignity is higher in the eyes of God than royalty....." "Royalty is a light emanating from God," he adds, "and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe, the argument of the book of perfection, the receptacle of all virtues. Modern language calls this light *farr-i-zidi* (the divine light), and the tongue of antiquity called it *Kiyan Khura* (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of any one, and men, in the presence of it, bend the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission." (*Ain*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., p. 3).

The conversion of a theocracy that had the sanction of religion and history, as it had been in force for nearly 375 years, into a secular State called for

the highest qualities of statesmanship, courage and force of character and was Akbar's greatest contribution to the building up of a stable empire and a contented people.

This theory of divine origin of monarchy was accepted by a vast majority of the people. The Hindus accepted it, as it was akin to the ancient Indian ideal of sovereignty and as they were assured of protection, justice and equality with Muslims. Barring a few religious fanatics, like Badayuni, Muslims also acquiesced in it, though it differed fundamentally from the Muslim theory inasmuch as it rejected the Quranic law as its basis, and substituted 'the divine will which manifests itself in the intuition of kings.' The theory was one of benevolent despotism, and eminently suited the conditions and circumstances of the age.

The Sovereign, His Powers and Duties

Akbar was an all-powerful monarch. In fact, he was a despot, but an enlightened as well as a benevolent despot. He was the head of the State, the supreme commander of the forces, and the chief executive, and possessed the supreme legislative authority. He was also the fountain-head of justice and personally decided cases and settled disputes. He was the guardian and father of his people. In spite of concentration of such wide powers, Akbar, like ancient Hindu kings, felt it binding to ascertain the wishes of the people, and hardly ever acted against their interests. But this was more or less a matter of personal discretion of the monarch. There was no written constitution to prescribe his duties, lay down his limitations, and exercise a check on his despotism. He was not bound to any course of action except by the fear of a rebellion, a popular uprising and the traditional customary laws and precedents.

As the head of the State and government, Akbar worked hard to discharge his manifold duties. We get a glimpse of his daily routine in the pages of

Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* from which we learn that he every day appeared three times for state business. Early at sunrise he was ready at *jharokha darshan* to show himself to his subjects. Here he was accessible to the common people and listened to their complaints and transacted state business. This took the form of an open court which generally lasted for four and a half hours. "Huge crowds assembled and there used to be much bustle." (*Badayuni*, Vol. II, pp. 325-326; *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 273). People of all descriptions and of both the sexes, were allowed to present petitions and to represent their cases in person. The Emperor listened to them and decided their cases on the spot. Besides this, he transacted some other business also, such as reviewing the troops of the *mansabdars*. After thus working for four and a half hours the emperor retired. He appeared a second time in the afternoon and held a full *darbar* in the *Diwan-i-Am*. Here he attended to daily routine business, particularly that relating to the forces, to the workshops (*karkhanas*) and to the appointments and promotions of *mansabdars* and grant of *jagirs*. The meeting usually lasted for a little over an hour and a half. In the evening and often during the night he met his ministers and advisers in the private audience hall (*Diwan-i-Khas*) where special business relating to the foreign relations and internal administration was attended to. Late in the night, he held consultations with his ministers on confidential matters of war and foreign policy or matters of the highest moment relating to the internal administration. This meeting was held in a room called *Daulat Khana*, which became known, in the time of Jahangir, *Ghusal Khana*, owing to its proximity to the royal bath-room. "His Majesty is accustomed," writes Abul Fazl, "to spend the hours of night profitably in the private audience hall. Eloquent philosophers and virtuous *Sufis* are then admitted. There are also present in these assemblies unprejudiced historians. On other occasions, matters relating to the

empire and revenue are brought up, when His Majesty orders for whatever has to be done in each case." Akbar devoted about ten hours a day to the business of the state. He was, however, wise enough to delegate much of the work to his ministers and officials, keeping in his hands the initiation of policy and the issuing of instructions and of seeing that they were properly complied with. Besides, he exercised successfully the functions of supervision and control over every department of administration. "A monarch," observes Akbar, "should not himself undertake duties which may be performed by his subjects. The error of others it is his part to remedy but his own lapses who may correct."

The Ministers

The central government under Akbar, after it was well-organised and evolved, consisted of four departments, each presided over by a minister. The Ministers were—(1) Prime Minister (*Vakil*), (2) Finance Minister (*Diwan* or *Wazir*), (3) Paymaster-General (*Mir Bakhshi*), and (4) Chief *Sadr* (*Sadr-us-Sadr*). Early in Akbar's reign ministers were usually appointed by the Prime Minister and their number was not fixed. On taking the reins of government in his own hands, Akbar deprived the Prime Minister of this privilege. He began appointing and dismissing his ministers as he liked. There was no definite tenure of their office and no definite rules of promotion. Even the Prime Minister was the king's creature and could be dismissed at royal will. The other ministers were distinctly the Prime Minister's subordinates. The ministers did not constitute a council and were generally invited separately to discuss matters relating to their departments. Sometime, the king took decisions on matters relating to various departments in consultation with the Prime Minister only. He would even summon high officials other than the ministers to his council. The Mughal ministers did not constitute a cabinet in the

modern sense of the term. They were secretaries rather than ministers, as the initiation of policy was in the hands of the Emperor and not in those of ministers.

(a) **The Prime Minister** (*Vakil*)

The Prime Minister under Akbar bore the title of *Vakil*. Sometimes, he was called *Vakil-i-Mutlaq*. Formerly, he was the *de facto* head of all the departments of the central government and had the power to appoint and dismiss other ministers who were looked upon as his subordinates. But after the dismissal of Bairam Khan, the *Vakil* was gradually deprived of these powers. First of all, the department of finance was taken out of his hands and a separate minister called *Diwan* was appointed to take charge of it. Next, he ceased to have full control over other departments. The *Diwan*, in course of time, became so important as to eclipse the authority and prestige of the *Vakil*. During the reign of Shah Jahan, the *Diwan* became the grand *Wazir* or Prime Minister. The *Vakil* then ceased to exist. For several years, Akbar did not fill the post of *Vakil*, and he acted as his own Prime Minister. When the office was revived, the *Vakil* was not entrusted with a portfolio. The post became ornamental and did not carry with it serious duties except those of an adviser to the Emperor or of his viceregent during his illness or absence from the capital.

(b) **The Finance Minister** (*Diwan or Wazir*)

The finance minister of Akbar's time was called *Diwan* or *Wazir*. The first finance minister was Muzaffar Khan who presumed to work independently of the Emperor and was removed and Raja Todar Mal was appointed in his place. Muzaffar Khan, Todar Mal and Shah Mansur were the three most notable finance ministers and all the three were skilled financiers and first-rate administrators.

As the head of the finance department, the *Diwan*

was in-charge of the revenues and expenditure of the empire. His main duties were to formulate rules and regulations for the land revenue settlement and for fixing the rates of other kinds of revenues, and to scrutinise and control disbursements. Almost all official records were sent to his office for his inspection and storage under his control. He had to scrutinise abstracts of all important transactions and payments. He was required to recommend appointments of provincial *diwans* and to guide and control them. He was required to affix his seal on all important revenue transactions, including grant of assignments and free-grants of land.

The *Diwan* enjoyed wide powers and discretion. His work was so heavy that assistants had to be appointed to help him. One of these was *Diwan-i-Khalsa* who was in-charge of *Khalsa* (crown or reserved) lands and the other was *Diwan-i-Jagir* who was in-charge of the lands that were given away in lieu of service (assignment) or as free grants (*sayurghal*). The third was *Sahib-i-Taujih* who was in-charge of military accounts. The fourth was *Diwan-i-Bayutat* whose duty was to supervise the accounts of various *karkhanas* or workshops, attached to the court. The treasury which was in charge of an officer called *Mushrif-i-Khazana*, was also under the control of the *Diwan*. All these officers were provided with necessary staff, consisting of accountants, clerks and peons.

As the department of finance was a most important branch of administration, Akbar took personal interest in its organisation and working, and appointed a board consisting of five experts to review its activity from time to time.

(c) **The Paymaster-General** (*Mir Bakhshi*)

The word *Bakhshi* seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit term *Bhikshu*. The office of *Mir Bakhshi* corresponded to the *Diwan-i-Ariz* of the

Sultanate period. His rank was next to that of the imperial *diwan*. He was required to maintain a register in which were recorded the names, ranks and salaries of the *mansabdars*. The salaries of all the officers were disbursed through his office. All orders of appointment to *mansabs* of all ranks passed through his office. As the head of the military department, he had to be in touch with every *mansabdar*. He was required to attend the royal *darbar* and stand on the right side of the throne. It was his duty to present candidates for service in the military department and to present also the soldiers and horses of the *mansabdars* before the king. One of his most important duties was to prepare a list of the guards who had to keep watch round the royal palace. The guards were changed every day, and all high *mansabdars* had to perform this duty by turns. The *Mir Bakhshi* was also required to post news-writers and spies in different provinces and to receive their reports and present them before the King. A special officer was appointed for this work during the time of Akbar's successors. The *Mir Bakhshi* was not the commander-in-chief of the forces, but he was sometimes required to conduct important military operations. He maintained a big office, and was required to issue certificates under his seal and signatures for grants of *mansabs*, sanctions of increments, branding of horses, assignments for guard duty, and musters of troops. He had also to divide the army in different sections and to prepare a list of high officials, who were required to attend on the King.

As the work of the department increased considerably, more than one *bakhshi* was appointed to assist the *Mir Bakhshi*. They were called *Bakhshi No. 1*, *Bakhshi No. 2* and so on. The *Mir Bakhshi* divided the work of his office among them. There was a separate *bakhshi* for Ahadi troops. There were two other kinds of *bakhshis*, known as *Bakhshi-i-Huzur* and *Bakhshi-i-Shagird-pesha*.

(d) **The Chief Sadr**

The *Sadr-us-Sadur* or the Chief *Sadr* was a very important minister and was required to discharge three-fold duties, namely, to act as the religious adviser to the Emperor, to disburse the royal charity and to function as the Chief Justice of the Empire. During the early days of Akbar's reign, the Chief *Sadr* enjoyed great power and prestige in all the three capacities. As the chief religious adviser, he was required to give authoritative rulings on conflicting interpretations of *Shara*, and to enforce them. It was his duty to see that the Emperor and his government did not go astray from the injunctions laid down in the Quran, and upheld the dignity of Islam. Another equally important duty of the Chief *Sadr* was to encourage Islamic learning. In order to achieve this object he had to be in intimate touch with the learned Muslim divines and to encourage them by grant of scholarships (*wazayafs*), subsistence allowances and free grant of lands (*sayur-ghal*). In all these matters, he had a free hand during the early days of Akbar's reign. In his capacity as the chief *qazi*, the *Sadr* was the second highest judicial authority, next only to the Emperor, who held court and decided cases, usually the appeals from the chief *qazi's* court. In this capacity the Chief *Sadr* recommended candidates for appointment to the posts of provincial, district and city *qazis*. Like other ministers, he had an official establishment with clerks, accountants and peons.

After Akbar had reorganised his administration and rejected the Islamic theory of government, the Chief *Sadr* naturally ceased to be his supreme religious adviser. In fact, during his later days, Akbar did not consult the orthodox *ulema*. Under the new dispensation it was not necessary for the Chief *Sadr* to be the upholder of Islamic law or even himself to be deeply learned in Islamic theology. He was now required to possess absolutely different

qualifications, which in the words of Abul Fazl were "As the circumstances of the men have to be enquired into before grants are made, and their petitions must be considered in fairness, an experienced man of correct intentions is employed for this office. He ought to be at peace with every party and must be kind towards the people at large in word and action. Such an officer is called *sadr*." (*Ain*, Vol. I, p. 268). The *sadr* of Akbar's later days was no longer to encourage only Islamic learning or to patronise only Muslim *ulema*. His duty was to disburse the royal charity to the people of all creeds.

Akbar clipped the powers of the Chief *Sadr* even so far as they related to the grant of scholarships and religious *jagirs*. He was required to recommend deserving scholars, pious men and indigent people, but generally the action was taken by the Emperor himself. Akbar took personal interest and introduced several important reforms in the department. He laid down elaborate rules for the grant of land and prescribed qualifications of eligibility for holding lands and stipends. He conferred power on other important courtiers to bring deserving cases to his notice. In view of this, it was not necessary that petitions for free grant of land should go to the Emperor through the Chief *Sadr* only. An enquiry revealed that there had been great corruption in this department in the early days of his reign and many undeserving persons had been given free grants of land. Akbar ordered the resumption of such lands and appointed separate *sadrs* in the provinces with a view to curtail the powers of the Chief *Sadr*. After these reforms, the department functioned efficiently.¹

There was no *Mir-i-Saman* or *Khan-i-Saman* as head of the Household Department under Akbar. There was, however, an officer with the designation of *Mir-i-Saman*, but he was in-charge of court fur-

¹ *Ain*, Vol. I, pp. 268-269.

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niture, stores, etc. The household department was under the Emperor himself and an officer called *Mir Bakawal* held charge of the royal kitchen. The royal workshops were under another high official called *Wazir-i-Bayutat*, but he did not hold the ministerial rank and worked under the supervision of the Finance Minister. Nevertheless, he wielded great authority and influence. It was during the time of Akbar's successors, that *Mir-i-Saman* became minister and was given charge of the royal Household Department which now also included the workshops, the royal kitchen, guards, etc.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Akbar divided his Empire into well-defined provinces, and established uniform administration in them. In 1602, the provinces numbered fifteen. They were : Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Ahmadabad, Bihar, Bengal, Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Malwa, Berar, Khandesh, and Ahmadnagar, Kashmir and Kandhar were districts (*sarkar*) and were included in the province of Kabul. Sindh, which was then known as Thatta, was a district, and was included in the province of Multan. Orissa formed a part of Bengal. The provinces were not of uniform size or income. They were known as *subas*.

The three provinces of the Dakhin, namely, Khandesh, Berar and Ahmadnagar were constituted into a single viceroyalty and were placed under Prince Daniyal.

Besides the provinces, there were within the empire many subordinate States which belonged to the chiefs who had accepted Akbar as their suzerain. These states were found in all parts of the empire and their rulers enjoyed varying degrees of power and prestige. They were enrolled as *mansabdars* in the imperial service and were required to be present at the court on important occasions and rendered military service whenever called. All these

states were reckoned as so many districts (*sarkars*) or parganas and were attached to various *subas* within the boundaries of which they happened to have been situated.

In each *suba* there were a governor styled *sipah salar*, a *diwan*, a *bakhshi*, a *sadr*, a *qazi*, a *kotwal*, a *mir-bahr* and a *waqaya navis*. Each of these provincial officers had an official establishment of his own which consisted of clerks, accountants and peons.

Sipah Salar (Governor)

The *sipah salar* was the head of the province and commanded a fairly big force. He was popularly called *subahdar* and sometimes only *suba*. He was the viceregent of the Emperor and was appointed by him. He was responsible for the welfare of the people of his province and was required to administer even-handed justice. He decided criminal cases. He was to maintain peace and order, and to punish the disaffected and the recalcitrant. He was to appoint reliable and loyal men for police duty and for intelligence service. He was to encourage agriculture and construct works of irrigation, roads, sarais, gardens, hospitals, wells, and similar other works. He was to see that the people enjoyed complete religious liberty. As his very name implied, he was a military officer and was required to maintain proper discipline among his troops and to exact obedience from them. He was entrusted with the work of realising the tribute from the vassal states situated within the boundaries of his *suba*.

The Diwan

The provincial *diwan* was the next most important officer in the *suba*. He was appointed on the recommendation of the imperial *diwan*, was responsible to him and was not subordinate to the governor. He was in-charge of the finance department and his duties were to collect revenue, to keep

accounts of balances and receipts, to disburse the salaries of provincial officers and to administer civil justice. He was instructed to encourage the growth of agriculture and to keep a strict watch over the treasury. He was also to scrutinise the accounts of the revenue collectors (*amils*), and to see that there were no arrears of revenue. He was required to send regularly periodical reports of the condition of the province to the imperial *diwan*.

The *diwan* practically enjoyed the same status, though not the same authority as the governor, was not responsible to the latter, and in financial matters stood at par with him. Thus, there were two parallel and mutually independent authorities in every province—the *sipah salar* and the *diwan*. The *sipah salar* was the head of the military, police and executive services, while the *diwan* was the head of the civil and revenue branch. Each was required to keep a watch on and act as a check over the other. Each had to report to the court about the activities of the other. This was done in order to provide for a check on the ambitious designs of the high provincial officers and to prevent them from oppressing the people. In spite of the fact that these two officers were rivals, the provincial administration was so organised as to make co-operation and collaboration between them as the essential condition of their success. There was, therefore, in normal times harmony and co-operation in the provincial administration.

The Sadr and the Qazi

These two offices were generally combined and only one officer was appointed to discharge both the functions. It was the duty of the *sadr* to recommend to the imperial *sadr* deserving persons for the award of cash stipends or free grants of land. The *qazi* was the head of the judicial department of the province and decided cases. In this capacity, he was also required to supervise the work of the *qazis* in the

districts and towns. There were also *qazis* in large villages with considerable Muslim population.

The Provincial Bakhshi

The provincial *bakhshi* was appointed on the recommendation of the *mir bakhshi* and was in-charge of recruitment, organisation, discipline and efficiency of the provincial army under the command of the *sipah salar*. He was also the chief newswriter of the province and had to report about the activities and conduct of the governor and other officers. Thus, he exercised some kind of check on the governor and on other officers of the province.

Waqaya Navis

Sometimes, the provincial *bakhshi* was required to act as the *waqaya navis* of his *suba*. Often, however, there was a separate officer to discharge this duty. He had to post newswriters and spies in all important places in the province, including the offices of the *sipah salar*, *diwan*, *qazi*, *faujdar*, the police officers, etc. They were to submit their daily reports to him. He made an abstract of these reports, and sent it to the court. As the success of the entire administration depended upon the efficiency of the secret service, great attention was paid to this branch. Sometimes the central government appointed newswriters and spies and sent them to the provinces and the *parganas*. These were required to act under the orders of the central government.

The Kotwal

The *kotwal* was in-charge of the law and order, internal defence, health, sanitation and peace of the provincial capital. He had wide powers, and an office and many subordinates. He was the supreme administrator of all the *thanas* of the province. He discharged some of the duties that are discharged by modern municipal boards. He was also a committing and trying magistrate.

The Mir Bahr

The *mir bahr* was in-charge of the customs and boats and ferry taxes, and port duties in coastal towns.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The Faujdar

Each province or *suba* was divided into a number of districts (*sarkars*). Every district had a *faujdar*, an *amal-guzar*, a *qazi*, a *kotwal*, a *bitikchi* and a *khazanadar*. The head of the district was *faujdar* who, as his title shows, was a military officer. He had three duties to discharge. The first was to maintain peace and tranquility in his jurisdiction, to keep the roads free from robbers and thieves, and to enforce imperial regulations. Secondly, being a military officer, he was in-charge of a small force or local militia. It was his duty to keep his army well-equipped, and in readiness for service. Thirdly, he was required to assist the collector (*amal-guzar*) in the work of revenue collection. As the efficiency of the district administration depended upon the vigilance and personal character of the *faujdar*, Akbar devised means to keep an eye on him and other local officers. The central government kept itself in touch with the *faujdar* by sending high officials to inspect his work. The reports of the spies and newswriters also kept the central government informed of the activities of the district and pargana officers. Immediate action was taken, if it was found that they were amiss in their duties or were oppressing the people.

The Amal-Guzar

The next important district officer was the *amal-guzar* or revenue collector who was assisted by a large staff. Besides, being the collector of revenue, he was also required to punish robbers and other miscreants in order to protect the peasantry. He was authorised to advance loans (*taqavi*) to the latter and to recover them gradually. He was also instruct-

ed to allow to the headman a commission of half a biswa on each bigha after full collection of the revenue rental and to redress the grievances of the agriculturists. He was to supervise the work of the treasurer of his district and to send monthly reports of receipts and expenditure to the court, and remit regularly the revenue of the district to the royal treasury.

The Bitikchi

Among the several assistants of the *amal-guzar*, the *bitikchi* occupied an important place. In fact, as far as revenue affairs were concerned, his rank was next to that of the *amal-guzar*. Although he was officially styled as a writer,² his duty was to prepare necessary papers and records regarding the nature of the land and its produce and it was on the basis of these records that the assessment was made by the *amal-guzar*. The *bitikchi* was required to obtain from the *qanungos* the statement of the average revenue of each village which was calculated on the basis of last ten years' produce. He was required to have a knowledge of the peculiar customs and land tenures obtaining in his district. He was to record the area of arable and waste lands of each village, to define the boundaries of the villages, and to enter in his records the contracts made with the cultivators. "He shall note the name of the *munsif*, the superintendent, the land-surveyor and the *thanadar* and also those of the cultivators and the headmen and record below the kind of produce cultivated." He was to grant a receipt to the cultivator paying revenue into the treasury, scrutinise the records of the *patwari* and the headman, keep daily and monthly accounts of income and expenditure, and forward monthly abstracts of the same to the court.

The Khazanadar (Treasurer)

The next officer attached to the collector in

² *Bitikshi* is a Turkish word meaning writer.

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every district was the *khazanadar* (treasurer). His main duties were to receive the revenue, to keep it and to forward it to the central treasury. He was instructed to accept coins of former reigns as bullion and not to harass the paying cultivators. He was to deposit the money safely into the treasury and to deliver one key to the collector and to keep the other with himself. He was not authorised to make any disbursements. Detailed instructions as to how the revenue from the district should be sent to the central treasury, were laid down and were required to be scrupulously followed.

THE PARGANA

The Shiqdar

Each *sarkar* was divided into a number of *parganas* or *mahals*. The *pargana* was the lowest fiscal and administrative unit of administration. There were four principal officers in every *pargana*. They were : the *shiqdar*, the *amil*, the *fotadar* and the *kar-kuns*. Besides these, there were, as in the time of Sher Shah, two other semi-official functionaries, such as the *qanungo* and the *chaudhari*. It seems that the functions and duties of the *shiqdar* remained the same as were in the time of Sher Shah. He was the executive officer of the *pargana* and was responsible for its general administration. Besides maintaining peace and order in the *pargana*, he had to receive the money when the cultivators brought it to pay in the *pargana* treasury, and to supervise and control the treasury staff. He used to administer criminal justice; but his powers as a magistrate were limited. It was his duty to forward such cases as did not fall within his cognisance to the *kotwal* of the *sarkar*.

The Amil

The *Amil* (sometimes called *Munsif*) had to discharge the same duties in the *pargana* as the *amil-guzar* in the *sarkar*. His main work was that of assessment and collection of land revenue. He was

required to deal directly with the peasantry and not through the headmen of the villages. Besides, he assisted the *shiqdar* in the maintenance of law and order to seek the assistance of *shiqdar* in the work of the collection of revenue. Probably, he also dispensed civil justice.

The Fotadar

The *Fotadar* was the treasurer of the *pargana* and had to discharge the same duties as the *khazandardar* of the district. The *karkuns* were the writers and kept records of the arable land, the kinds of crops raised, the revenue payable from individual cultivators, and the actual collections and arrears, if any. Probably, the records were kept in Persian from the later days of Akbar's reign to the end of the Mughal empire.

The Qanungo

The *Qanungo* was the head to the *patwaris* in the *pargana*, and kept the records of the crops, the revenue demands, actual payments, arrears, etc. of the entire *pargana* as the *patwari* was required to do for the village. He was a repository of the knowledge of various kinds of land tenures and other peculiarities relating to the nature of the soil, assessment and collection of revenue. He was, therefore, called by Abul Fazl, 'the refuge of the husbandman.' He was formerly paid a commission of one per cent on the revenue of the *pargana*; but Akbar substituted cash salary from the treasury in place of the commission, and granted him an assignment of land for his personal maintenance. There were three grades of *qanungos*, the lowest was twenty rupees a month, second thirty and the first fifty.

SEAPORTS AND FRONTIER OUTPOSTS

In addition to the *parganas* there were some other political and administrative divisions in certain localities. These were seaports, frontier outposts or

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frontier forts and *thanas*. The Mughals had no navy; but as their eastern and western frontier touched the seas, they had a large number of seaports in their possession. The seaports were valuable owing to a large volume of trade that passed through them and also because those on the west coast were the places at which the *Haj* pilgrims embarked on their voyage for Arabia. Consequently, they were treated as administrative units. It is true that nominally they were attached as sub-divisions of a *suba*, but in actual practice, the officers appointed to keep watch over them acted under the orders of the central government. There was an officer in-charge of a port. Sometimes, more than one port was placed under the charge of one officer. In big ports, like *Surat* or *Cambay*, there were a *faujdar*, a *qazi*, a *muhtasib*, a *darogha* of the mint, a *mutasaddi*, a treasury officer, an accountant and a few *karkuns*. A *Suar* was classed as a *sarkar* and comprised several *parganas*. It had a fairly strong force to guard it. Similarly, frontier outposts were garrisoned with troops and were administered as separate units. The ports as well as frontier outposts were particularly important for the lucrative trade that passed through them. In each of these places, there was a custom house with a superintendent as its head, and a large staff of clerks, peons, waiters and porters to collect the custom dues from the merchants.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

The *Ain-i-Akbar* gives a picture of the municipal administration during the reign of Akbar. Over every town of considerable importance a *kotwal* was appointed to take charge of what are, in modern terminology, called municipal duties, besides police work. In small towns, where there was no *kotwal*, these duties devolved upon the *amal-guzar* of the district, who appointed suitable officers to discharge municipal and police duties under his supervision. (Ain, Vol. II, p. 47). The *kotwal* was appointed by

the central government and was the head of a small force adequate for maintaining order in the city. He was empowered to appoint city guards who were allotted separate parts of the city for watch during day and night. The *kotwal* was instructed to divide the municipal area into quarters or wards each of which was put in charge of a subordinate officer appointed by the *kotwal* himself. In every city, the artisans grouped themselves under various guilds, like the merchants guilds and the craftsmen guilds of medieval Europe. The *kotwal* usually recognised the guild master and sometimes he nominated one. There was also a broker through whom business was conducted. As the names of the various lanes in the old cities indicate, people following the same profession resided in the same lane. It was the *kotwal's* duty to keep himself in touch with the people and to have information about the condition of every family. He was required to know the coming and departure of guests of every household. "He was to keep a register of every house and frequented road, and engage the citizens in a pledge of reciprocal assistance, and bind them to a common participation of weal and woe." (*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 41.) The *kotwal* was to look after the sanitation of the town and keep the public thoroughfare free from obstruction and nuisance. It was his duty to force the idle and the vagabond to some sort of work.

We have ample information about the powers and functions of the *kotwal*. His powers were large and responsibilities very heavy. His duties may be classified as follows :

1. Watch and ward of the city.
2. Control of the market.
3. Proper care and disposal of heirless property.
4. Prevention of crimes.
5. Enforcement of Akbar's social reforms.
6. Control of slaughter-houses and cemeteries.

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"He was either to discover the thieves and the stolen goods or himself make good the loss." He controlled prices, inspected markets, and weights and measures. If any citizen or merchant from outside died without leaving heirs, the *kotwal* was to make an inventory of his belongings and make arrangements for the safety of his property and to deliver it to the legitimate heirs. He was to see that the security of life, liberty and property were guaranteed to the people, and he was enjoined not to violate on any account the privacy of domestic life. He was also required to supervise the slaughter houses, which were erected outside the city, and not to allow any animal to be killed on certain fixed days of the year. He had to see that butchers, hunters of animals and washers of the dead were segregated in a particular part of the city and were prevented from mixing with other people. "He was required to look after the housing and comforts of the foreigners, who were lodged in a separate *sarai* and whose actions and movements, going and coming, were carefully watched."

Akbar organised the city administration on ancient Hindu model. The city became the seed-pot of his social and humanitarian activity. The *kotwal* was required to enforce the imperial regulations regarding the prohibition of the *sati*, forcible conversion to Islam, performance of circumcision under the age of twelve, child-marriage, infanticide and immorality. Women of ill-fame were segregated and compelled to live outside the city. It was the *kotwal's* duty to keep a list of such women and watch all those people who visited them.

The *kotwal's* duties being very heavy, he was empowered to employ requisite number of assistants such as police officers, spies, clerks and peons. The uniforms of the *kotwal* and the city police were of red colour.

Village Communities

The most important constitutional contribution of our race was in the field of rural administration. Since times immemorial, there have existed in India well-organised village communities fittingly styled village commonwealths, which constitute brotherhoods and managed their affairs on democratic lines. The village communities existed as autonomous units throughout the medieval period. The *Sultans* of Delhi did not find it profitable and practicable to interfere with them, and therefore, left them alone and allowed them to lead their own life. Sher Shah kept touch with the village communities through the semi-official functionaries, namely the headmen, the *patwaris* and the *chaukidars*. Akbar went a step further. He recognised the village *panchayat* as a legally established court of justice and upheld its decisions. He brought the *patwari* and the *chaukidar* into intimate touch with the *pargana* government. Although he did not interfere with village life and administration, he added to its prestige by according official recognition to its activities.

Contemporary authorities do not furnish us any material on the basis of which it might be possible to construct a complete picture of the village administration during the reign of Akbar. Even Abul Fazl makes only casual references to village life. But as the village commonwealth functioned satisfactorily till after the middle of the nineteenth century and in some cases it does even now, it may be presumed that the village government not only existed throughout the ancient and medieval times but also made a substantial contribution to the administration, stability and well-being of our people. Every village constituted a village community. It had a council consisting of heads of the families inhabiting it. The council was responsible for the village administration, such as, watch and ward, sanitation, elementary education, irrigation, medical relief

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public works, moral and religious welfare of the people, and the dispensation of justice. It also made arrangements for recreation, amusements and celebration of festivals. There was a *panchayat* for trying cases. We have it on the testimony of an inscription of the early tenth century that the village council or *panchayat* was divided into six sub-committees, each of which was entrusted with separate duties. (*Village Government in British India* by John Mathai, pp. 25-26). The sub-committees were :

1. Annual committee.
2. Garden committee.
3. Tank committee.
4. Gold committee.
5. Committee of justice.
6. *Panchvara* committee.

The members of the sub-committees were chosen by some sort of election, and often, it may be presumed, unanimously. Besides, there were caste *panchayats* to decide caste and family disputes. In every village, there were one or two watchmen, a priest, a schoolmaster, an astrologer, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a potter, a washerman, a barber, a physician and a *patwari* or an accountant. These were reckoned as village functionaries. They carried on village administration in the spirit of mutual co-operation.

The village was a self-sufficient commonwealth and its members stood together in weal and woe. The existence of village communities was responsible for the preservation of our society and culture through the ages.

The Army : the Mansabdari System

During the early years of his reign, Akbar's army was mostly foreign in personnel, consisting as it did, of Mongols, Turks, Uzbeks, Persians and Afghans who had followed Babar and Humayun as

their regular troops or camp-followers. The commanding officers were of the same race as the troops and were granted large assignments of land in lieu of their salaries. In view of Humayun's deficiency as a leader of men and the semi-independent position of the commanders, the military aristocracy was inclined to be insubordinate, making the Mughal army a weak instrument of force. The officers did not maintain the number of troops which they were required to have. They resorted to irregularities and fraudulent practices and cheated the government and the soldiers alike. They attempted to resist every reform and tried to prevent Akbar from centralising the authority and making the army a unitary organisation. During his early days, Akbar had to face numerous rebellions on the part of his Mughal and Uzbek officers. He was forced to the conclusion that there was no other way of establishing his authority except by taking the absolute power of direction and control in his own hands, reducing the insubordinate military officers and reorganising the army in such a manner as to stamp out corruption and to convert it into a powerful disciplined force. The result was the *mansabdari* system.

The word *mansab* means place or rank, and *mansabdars* were, therefore, holders of ranks in the imperial service. The lowest rank was that of ten and the highest that of ten thousand. Towards the end of his reign, Akbar raised the highest rank to twelve thousand (*Badayuni*, Vol. II, p. 342). At the time of the establishment of the *mansabdari* system, the ranks above five thousand were reserved for the imperial princes, that is, the Emperor's sons and grandsons; but subsequently Raja Man Singh, Mirza Aziz Koka and one or two other top-ranking officials were promoted to the rank of 7,000. Thereafter, the *mansabs* of 8,000 and above were meant for the members of the royal family. In the beginning Akbar had established only one class or grade

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for each *mansab*. But towards the end of his reign, he introduced three grades in each of the *mansabs* from 5,000 downwards by instituting what is known as the *sawar* rank. Thus, many *mansabdars* held a double rank, i.e., both *zat* and *sawar* ranks. The *mansabdars* were not required to maintain the full number of troops indicated by their ranks or *mansabs*. For example, a *mansabdar* of 1,000 was not required to have 1,000 troops under his command. It is consequently wrong to call a *mansabdar* of 1,000 the commander of 1,000 as has been done by some historians, including Blochmann, W. Irvine, V. A. Smith, and others. The *mansabdars*, no doubt, were required to maintain a certain number of troops in their employ : but it was only a fraction of their ranks. The *mansabs* were a convenient method of fixing the status and salaries of the imperial officers. It was not necessary that a *mansabdar* of high rank should be employed on a correspondingly high post in the service. Raja Man Singh enjoyed the rank of 7,000 but he was never employed a minister at the court. The ministers held *mansabs* inferior to that of Man Singh. Similarly, Abul Fazl held much smaller a *mansab* or rank than that of many members of the imperial service, and yet he enjoyed a higher post than those who were superior to him in rank and salary. Nor was it necessary that a *mansabdar* must be employed on a regular post or duty. Some *mansabdars* had no duty except that of waiting on the Emperor and performing the work which they might be called upon to do from time to time. The services were not classified into civil service and military service, and any *mansabdar* was liable to be called upon to discharge either duty at any time in his career. All imperial officers, except perhaps the *qazis* and the *sadrs*, were enrolled as members of the *mansabdari* system and were required to maintain some troops proportionate to their ranks. All the vassal chiefs, who were rulers of semi-independent states, were also enlisted as *mansabdars* and were

required, like other *mansabdars*, to maintain regular troops under their command and to bring them for muster or review at stated intervals. There were no fixed rules of appointment, promotion or dismissal of the *mansabdars* who held offices at the pleasure of the Sovereign and were promoted, degraded or dismissed at his will. The usual practice, however, was that when a *mansabdar* did well at muster and brought the requisite number of troops, who were found smart and well-disciplined, he was promoted to the next higher *mansab*. Sometimes, an exceptionally competent *mansabdar*, who pleased the Emperor by loyal and devoted service, was given an abnormally high lift. It was not necessary for a *mansabdar* to pass through various grades in order to reach a high *mansab*. The *mansabdars* were paid high salaries in cash and sometimes by assignments of land expected to yield the revenue corresponding to the salaries fixed for particular *mansabs*. Akbar, however, preferred payment in cash to that by grant of land. Even when a *mansabdar* was paid by assignment of land, he was not allowed to retain it for a long time, and his assignment was transferred from province to province. After the institution of the *mansabdari* system, the assessment and collection of land revenue in the assigned areas, too, were done by the officers of the revenue department, and not by the agents of the assigners who had no power to increase the fixed demand or realise from the cultivator anything in excess of the fixed revenue. It has been supposed by some writers, notably, Irvine, Smith and Moreland, that the *mansabdars* were not paid for all the twelve months of the year, but for seven to nine months, and sometime only for four months. This is not borne out by contemporary authorities which clearly state that the *mansabdars* were paid salaries for the full year. The misunderstanding seems to have been caused by the fact that the government deducted the money on account of loans and cost of equipment supplied from the salary

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of the *mansabdars* concerned and 5 p.c. of the salary of every trooper under a *mansabdar* on account of the trooper's equipment.

Mansabdars were allowed to recruit their own troops who generally belonged to their own race or tribe. Most of the *mansabdars* were foreign Turks, Persians and Afghans and men of other foreign nationalities also. The number of Indian Muslims holding high ranks was small. The *mansabdars* were required to purchase their own horses and equipment; but sometimes these were supplied by the government. At the time of enlistment and first muster, the descriptive roll of the troops and the horses under a *mansabdar* were recorded and the horses branded. Each horse bore two marks, the government mark on the right thigh and the *mansabdar's* mark on the left thigh. Every *mansabdar* had to undergo periodical musters, which occurred sometimes once a year, and sometimes every three years, when troops had to be presented and inspected. Each *mansabdar* had a fixed rate of pay out of which he had to defray the cost of his establishment and the salary of his troops. His salary, even after deducting the cost of establishment, was very handsome as the table by Moreland, given below, will show.

MONTHLY SALARY IN RUPEES

Rank	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	Cost of appropriate force
				10,600
5,000	30,000	29,000	28,000	6,700
3,000	17,000	16,800	16,700	3,000
1,000	8,200	8,100	8,000	1,170
		2,300	2,100	185
500	2,500	240	230	44
			75	
50	250	82½		
10	100			

Zat and Sawar

Scholars hold divergent opinions about the significance of *zat* and *sawar*. According to Blochmann, *zat* indicated the number of troops which a *mansabdar* was expected to maintain, while *sawar* meant the actual number of horsemen that he maintained. On the other hand, Irvine holds that the *zat* indicated the actual number of cavalry, while *sawar* was an honour and represented, like the *zat*, the actual number indicated by it. According to Dr. R. P. Tripathi, the *sawar* rank implied an additional honour, but no obligation on the part of the *mansabdar* to maintain the number of horsemen indicated by it. He was, however, paid an extra allowance for the *sawar* rank. Mr. Abdul Aziz is of the opinion that the *zat* rank imposed an obligation to maintain a fixed number of elephants, horses, beasts of burden and carts, but no horsemen or cavalry, whereas *sawar* represented the actual number of cavalry under a *mansabdar*. Blochmann's interpretation seems to approximate to the actual state of affairs as it existed after the institution of the *sawar* rank. It appears that for several years after the establishment of the *mansabdari* system *mansabdars* of various ranks failed to maintain and bring to muster the numbers of cavalry fixed for their several ranks. Moreover, the lumping together of horses, horsemen (cavalry), elephants, camels and oxen etc. in each rank caused confusion. It was probably to put an end to this confusion and to secure an absolute compliance of the number of horsemen fixed for each rank that Akbar instituted the *sawar* rank, as distinct from the *zat* rank. Thereafter, the *zat* rank indicated the number of horses, elephants, beasts of burden and carts required to be maintained, but not horsemen or cavalry. The *zat* rank was not personal rank, as has been wrongly supposed by modern scholars. The *sawar* rank, on the other hand, indicated the actual number of horsemen to

be maintained by a *mansabdar* in Akbar's reign. Under his successors, this regulation became a little lax, and the number of horsemen fell below the *sawar* rank.

The Three Grades

It has been pointed out that every *mansab* of 5,000 and below comprised of three grades, namely, first grade, second grade and third grade. A *mansabdar* belonged to the first grade of a particular rank, if his *sawar* rank was the same as his *zat* rank. If, on the other hand, his *sawar* rank was less than *zat* rank but did not fall below half that of the latter, he belonged to the second grade in that rank. But, if his *sawar* rank was less than half of his *zat* rank or he had no *sawar* rank at all, he belonged to the third grade in that rank. For example, a *mansabdar* of 5,000 *zat* belonged to the first grade in the rank of 5,000, if his *sawar* rank was also 5,000. He belonged to the second grade, if his *zat* rank was 5,000 and *sawar* rank 2,500. And if his *zat* rank was 5,000 and *sawar* rank less than 2,500, he belonged to the third grade. This rule was applicable for all *mansabs*. A further complication was introduced by the institution of what is known as *du aspa* and *sih aspa*. But we are not concerned with them here, as these additions were made in the time of Akbar's successors.

Some *mansabdars* commanded troops that were recruited directly by the state and not by the *mansabdars* concerned. Such troops were called *dakhili* or supplementary troops. There were *dakhili* cavalry and *dakhili* infantry. Besides, there were gentlemen troopers called *ahadis*. They were recruited individually and were under the command of a separate *mansabdar* or officer, and had a *diwan* and a *bakhshi* of their own. *Ahadis* were considered very efficient and loyal troops, and were paid high salaries;

sometimes each *ahadi* trooper at Rs. 500 per month.

The Mughal army comprised cavalry, infantry, artillery and elephantry, but no navy. Cavalry was by far the most important branch, and was regarded the 'flower of the army.' It was drawn mostly from the *mansabdars* and the *ahadis*. The infantry was not of much consequence. It consisted of matchlockmen, archers, Mewatis, swordsmen, wrestlers, mace-bearers, porters and *chelas* (slaves). The matchlockmen or *bandukchis* formed the most important branch of infantry. We know from the *Ain-i-Akbari* that the total number of matchlockmen under Akbar was 12,000. The Mewatis numbered a few thousand, and were noted for their qualities as soldiers and skill as detectives. They were mostly employed as dispatch runners. There were one lakh of swordsmen of which 1,000 were kept in readiness for service at court. They were noted for their bravery, ability and swordsmanship. Porters and mace-bearers were also classed as soldiers. Artillery was not a very efficient branch, in spite of the fact that there were large pieces of ordnance, which were carried by many elephants and thousands of bullocks. There were many kinds of guns. There was an officer in-charge of this branch of the army, known as *Mir Atish*. Besides, there were war elephants who were used in various ways. They carried baggage. At the time of battle, they were furnished with defensive armours and offensive weapons. They caught hold of enemy soldiers, dashed them against the ground and trampled them under foot. They carried guns on their backs which were ignited and fired in battles. Such guns were called *gajnals*. A *gajnal* elephant carried two soldiers and two pieces of ordnance.

According to Blochmann, Akbar's standing army equipped and maintained from the imperial treasury was not more than 25,000. Later investigations

have shown that these figures are much too low. We know that the standing army maintained by Jahangir and Shah Jahan was not less than three lakhs strong. The numerical strength of Akbar's standing army could not have been less than three hundred thousand. In these figures should be included the contingents of *mansabdars* as well as the army directly attached to the Emperor. The infantry, which was much larger, is exclusive of these figures. Akbar bestowed a great deal of thought and attention on his military establishment, and laid down minute rules and regulations regarding its organisation, equipment and discipline. A separate department of branding (*Dagh Mahali*) was established under a high official assisted by several clerks. Every care was taken to see that the regulations were faithfully observed and the discipline of the army was not impaired. Being an unfailing judge of human character, the Emperor almost invariably appointed brave and competent *mansabdars*. He unerringly laid his finger on the weak points in his military department and removed its deficiencies without loss of time. He succeeded in making the system work so efficiently that he earned the credit of having a lifetime's unbroken record of victories in the field of battle.

The system was, however, inherently weak. Contemporary writers, specially Badayuni, have given graphic details how during the first half of Akbar's reign *mansabdars* cheated the government by bringing to muster men from the streets in military uniform and passing them off as soldiers. It was by no means rare for troopers to substitute indifferent horses for good ones supplied to them by the military department. It took Akbar many years indeed to stamp out corruption. After 1581, we do not hear of many cases of proxies of men or horses at musters or misappropriation of soldiers' salaries by their *mansabdars*. But this was because of Akbar's un-

common ability as a leader and administrator and his vigilance and discipline. Individual troops under the system were more loyal to their chiefs than to the Emperor. The division of the army was *mansabdar*-wise, and a *mansabdar* commanded the same troops throughout his life. There were no transfers of officers from regiment to regiment. Secondly, within a *mansabdar's* division there was no classification of troops into regiments. All the troops were immediately under him and every soldier had personal relations with him. Nor was the numerical strength of each arm regulated and fixed in a *mansabdar's* contingent. Thirdly, corruption in some form or other was unavoidable in a system which left the duties of recruitment and administration of the army to the *mansabdars*, that is, the commanding officers themselves. Fourthly, the practice of payment through the *mansabdars* was pernicious, and led to abuses. Fifthly, the *mansabdari* system had no organic centre and lacked the cohesive force which must always be essential in a national army. Sixthly, the standard of efficiency varied from unit to unit under various *mansabdars*, and there was no uniformity of weapon, equipment, or discipline. Seventhly, the pomp and display which had become natural with the *mansabdars* acted as an obstacle to military efficiency. Although Akbar sometimes brushed aside all pomp and display in times of emergency, under normal circumstances his army was encumbered with numerous attendants, dancing girls, elephants, camels, bands, offices, workshops, and bazars. Eighthly, Akbar's artillery was the weakest branch of the army and in spite of much show of big cannon, *rakhlas* and *gajals*, it proved ineffective against a fort like Asirgarh. Finally, Akbar's army, consisting as it did of officers and troops of several nationalities, over two-third of whom were foreigners, was not a national army, and was not bound by common interests and common sentiment of love of the country. On account of

these inherent weaknesses, the Mughal army considerably deteriorated under Akbar's successors.

In spite of so many defects, the *mansabdari* system was an improvement upon the military establishment of the medieval period. It was a sort of compromise between tribal chieftainship and the feudal system of levying troops. It combined the advantages of both the systems. Moreover, it was designed to tap every source of fighting strength in the country. Various units were particularly suited to certain special kinds of military duties. For example, certain Rajput *mansabdars* were diplomatically used against certain other Rajput chiefs with whom they were at feud. The system assured steady loyalty of the *mansabdars* to the Emperor and offered an incentive for individual distinction. Every *mansabdar* was aware that his promotion or degradation depended upon his loyalty and quality of his service. Through them was ensured the loyalty of the important military and political sections of the population of the country.

Finance

Although the modern science of Public Finance had not yet come into existence, Akbar's financial policy was highly developed and much in advance of the age. The Emperor was conversant with the implications of the problem, and was assisted by competent financiers, like Raja Todar Mal, Muzaffar Khan and others who were well-acquainted with the main problem of reconciling the interests of the people and the needs of the government, and of advancing the well-being of both. But Akbar's financial system, as it came to exist during the later years of his reign, was not established without considerable effort and experimentation. In fact, he devoted years of sustained labour and thought before he could place the finances of his empire on sound scientific foundation.

Akbar did not believe in the Islamic theory of taxation, which recognised only four sources of revenue, namely, *kharaj*, *khams*, *zakat* and *jizya*, the last two being religious taxes. On the contrary, his theory of taxation was akin to that of the ancient Hindus, and seems to have been derived from our ancient literature. In describing this theory, Abul Fazl says that the existence of a just monarch is essential for the protection of life, honour, property and liberty of the people, and the former has, therefore, to be paid for his services to the public. As the quality and nature of the soil differ in various countries, "the administration of each state must take these circumstances into consideration and fix its demand accordingly." (*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 55).

The fiscal sources of the empire were divided into two main divisions—central and local. The central revenue was derived from Commerce, Mint, Presents, Inheritance, Salt, Customs and Land. Of these, the land revenue was the most lucrative and important. Quite early in his reign, Akbar had abolished the religious taxes charged from the Hindus, such as the pilgrims' tax and the *jizya*, which were realised with punctillious care by all his Muslim predecessors. *Zakat*, which was of two kinds, namely, first a religious tax from the Muslim to be spent for religious and charitable welfare of the Muslim only, and second on cattle and some other articles, lapsed gradually. This was natural in a state in which the secular element predominated over the religious. The state not only derived revenue from commerce, but also sometimes participated in it. All kinds of ammunition, particularly lead and saltpetre, were state monopolies. There were attached to the imperial household department many workshops, which, though not primarily meant for revenue, brought much income to the exchequer. Mints for the issue of various kinds of coins were established in several towns; those, too, constituted a source of

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revenue. The Emperor used to receive costly presents from officials, nobles, vassals and foreign visitors. He invariably gave something in return, but it was slight as compared to the value of the presents. The royal treasury thus acquired lakhs of rupees every year. All unclaimed and heirless property also passed to the state. The Emperor, however, did not escheat the property of nobles or officials on their death, as has been erroneously supposed by European travellers and writers. A salt duty was levied. Custom duties ranged from 22 to 5 per cent. Ports brought in a lot of revenue from this source. Local revenues came from octroi duties, ferry and road taxes, and from several *abwabs* (cesses).

The revenue from all the above sources amounted only to a small fraction of the income from land which according to the calculation of W. H. Moreland, was, during the later years of Akbar's reign, ninety millions of rupees. The land revenue was charged on the basis of the government records which were prepared after ascertaining the average produce of various kinds of lands for ten years. The system was the result of a series of experiments undertaken during the early years of Akbar's reign. On taking over the administration from the hands of Bairam Khan in 1560, Akbar found his small kingdom parcelled among his officials and soldiers, leaving for the crown a comparatively small portion known as the *khalsa* or the crown or the reserved land. As it was in the interest of the administration to satisfy *jagirdars* the revenue figures were magnified, i.e., the revenue of the *jagirs* and consequently of the whole empire was shown larger than what it really was. There was hardly any money in the treasury. On one occasion, it failed to produce Rs. 18 that Akbar needed for some urgent business. The incident compelled him to pay an immediate attention to his finance department. Thereafter, he made a series of experiments for improving it. The first of

these was undertaken in 1560, followed by another in 1562, when Akbar appointed Aitmad Khan to look into the affairs of the *khalsa* lands, which comprised the provinces of Agra and Delhi and a part of Lahore. These two and a half *subas* were divided into several areas, each yielding a crore of dams or two and a half lakhs of rupees. The measure introduced made no fundamental change in the system of assessment. Sher Shah's schedules of assessment, which were in vogue since the time of Humayun and uniformly applied to all the *parganas* of his dominions, the rates differing only in respect of each crop, continued in operation as before. The land was measured locally and the state demand was converted into cash on the basis of the prices of various kinds of crops fixed by the Emperor. The prices fixed were also uniform for all the *parganas* and were usually those current in the vicinity of the capital or the court. In 1566 the third experiment was undertaken. Muzaffar Khan, who was appointed *diwan* in 1563 with Todar Mal as his assistant, noted two glaring defects in the system, namely, the fictitious roll rent and the unfairness of converting the state demands into cash on the basis of only one schedule of prices for the whole of the empire. He achieved some success, but as the state did not yet make an arrangement for the measurement of land by its own official and also failed to utilise the records of the *patwaris* in the villages, the rent roll (*Hal-i-Hasil* or *Juma Bundi*) prepared by Muzaffar Khan in 1566, did not fully correspond to the actual revenue. He, however, succeeded in doing away with the second defect. As a result of his efforts, the state demand was henceforth commuted into cash, not on a uniform basis, but on that of the prices current in different localities. This removed only one defect in the system. So another experiment was undertaken in the thirteenth year (1569) of the reign, when Shihab-ud-din Ahmed, the new *diwan*, abandoned Sher Shah's schedule of assessment so far as the *khalsa*

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land was concerned, and introduced the practice of calculating the state demand by ascertaining in a rough manner the produce of the fields. This system technically called *nasq*, and popularly *kankut*, implies a rough estimate of the produce of the soil without measuring the unthreshed crop or grain. When the crops ripen but are still standing in the field the government agents go round each field accompanied by the village headman and one or two other respectable people and each man separately makes an estimate of the total yield of the field. The mean of all the separate estimates is set down as the total produce of the field on the basis of which the government share is calculated. If the cultivator of the field objects to the estimate as being too high, negotiations follow and after some higgling a compromise is arrived at. It is not clear whether the system introduced in 1569 was fieldwise or villagewise.

The fifth experiment occurred in the fifteenth year of the reign (1570-71) when the new schedules of assessment rates were prepared separately for each *pargana* and were based on the actual produce of the soil. The system was extended to include the *jagir* lands which had till that time been outside the scope of the experiment and of the control of the revenue ministry. The *nasq* was abandoned and the schedules of assessment rates were prepared on the basis of the measurement of land and ascertainment of the actual produce by government officials. Raja Todar Mal was the author of the scheme.

This experiment apparently proved very successful, for the assessment schedules prepared on its basis remained in force for ten years, i.e., upto 1580. At the end of this period, Akbar made only one more major experiment, which was to fix the assessment rates in cash. Though the rates of assessment of various kinds of grain had remained unchanged for ten years, the prices on the basis of

which the state demand in kind was commuted into cash had varied from year to year and had every year required the Emperor's sanction. The result was delay in the collection of revenue, as the Emperor could not remain at one place and give orders for fixing the prices as soon as their tables were placed before him. To do away with his difficulty, Akbar in 1580 abandoned the schedules of assessment rates in kind and fixed them in cash. The prices on the basis of which the demands in kind were commuted into cash were the average of the last ten years' prices in various localities.

The revenue settlement brought into existence in 1580 by the *Ain-i-Dahsala* ordinance implied certain fixed processes. First of all, the land in the empire was surveyed according to a uniform system of measurement, based on Sikandar Lodi's *gaz* or yard, measuring 41 digits or 33 inches. The *jarib* based on the *gaz* used by Sher Shah was made of hempen rope and was liable to contract and expand in cold and hot weathers respectively. Akbar substituted a bamboo *jarib* whose pieces were joined together by iron rings. The *bigha* which was the unit of area measured 60 yds. by 60 yds. or 3600 sq. yards. The total area of cultivable land in the possession of each cultivator in each village, each *pargana*, each district, and each province, and finally of the whole empire was ascertained. Secondly, all the cultivable land was classified into four divisions. The basis of classification was not the kind of land or fertility of the soil, but the continuity or otherwise of its cultivation. (1) The *polaj* land belonged to the first category and was always cultivated. (2) *Parauti* land, too, was almost always cultivated, but left fallow for a year or two in order to recuperate its fertility. (3) *Chachar* land had to be recuperated for three or four years. (4) *Banjar* land had to be left fallow for five years or more. Each of the first three kinds of land was sub-divided into three grades and

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the average produce of the three grades of each was taken and considered as standard for each class. Thirdly, on the basis of past ten years' produce, the average yield per *bigha* of each kind of land in respect of every crop was ascertained separately for every *pargana*. The state charged one third of the average produce. Fourthly, the state demand in kind was commuted into cash. For this purpose, Akbar divided his entire empire into many *dasturs*. All the places in a *dastur* were supposed to have uniform prices for each kind of corn. An average of last ten years' prices in respect of each kind of crop was ascertained separately for each *dastur*. The average was considered as the current price of grain. There were separate schedules of prices of different kind of corn, and the schedules of prices differed from *dastur* to *dastur*. These schedules, too, were called *dasturs*.

The state demand from each cultivator was fixed on the basis of the above calculation. It was not necessary to ascertain every year the actual produce or the current prices of grain in order to fix the state demand from the cultivators. All that was needed was to find out the kind and area of land under cultivation and the kind of crop raised by a cultivator in a given season. And both the cultivator and the government would calculate the amount of revenue, the former was required to pay and the latter to realise. The government was in a position to ascertain its land revenue within a month or so of the termination of the seed-sowing season. It did not, however, imply that after the introduction of the *Ain-i-Dahsala* the government ceased to maintain the records of the produce and of prices of corn. The officials in the *parganas* and in the villages continued as before to record the name of each kind of land, its area, its produce including the particulars of the crops, in the possession of every cultivator. They also recorded the current prices of all kinds of grain

in each *dastur*. These records were absolutely necessary and served the basis of future settlement.

Scholars have held opposite views about the *Ain-i-Dahsala*. V. A. Smith calls it ten years' settlement and seems to think that it was based on the average produce of the past ten years. He makes no mention of the average of the last ten years' prices on the basis of which the state demand in kind was converted into cash. On the other hand, W. H. Moreland, who devoted twenty years to the study of the fiscal problems of the Mughal age, refers to the average of ten years' cash demands only and makes no mention of ten years' average produce of each kind of land in respect of each crop. Prof. Sri Ram Sharma seems to maintain that the basis of Akbar's settlement till the end of his reign was the schedule of rates established by Sher Shah. Dr. R. P. Tripathi does not clearly specify the two averages, namely, those of produce and of prices. A close study of the subject, however, leads one to the conclusion that Akbar's settlement of 1580 was based on average produce of past ten years and that the state demand in cash was commuted into kind on the basis of the average prices of the last ten years. As has been shown above, for the purpose of ascertaining the average produce, each *pargana* was treated as unit, while the *dastur* was the unit for determining the prices. It is certain that the settlement was not permanent. Nor was it annual, as Abul Fazl says that Akbar had abandoned Sher Shah's annual settlement which was a source of delay and corruption. The state demand seems to have been revised periodically on the basis of the actual produce of the soil. Although, there is no definite record on the point, it seems to have been a ten years' settlement. Records of actual produce of every crop raised by each cultivator and also the prices of every kind of crop current in each *dastur* were meticulously maintained even after the establishment of the *Ain-i-Dahsala*.

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The system was originally introduced in the *khalsa* territory only. Its scope was extended in 1581-82 to include the *jagir* lands also. Henceforward the *jagirdars* were not permitted to administer their *jagirs* as they liked. Also an attempt was made to reclaim as much of *banjar* land as possible. For this purpose, loans were advanced to the cultivators who undertook the labour of bringing such land under cultivation. Collectors were instructed to charge only a nominal revenue for such land, and raise it only gradually and assess full revenue only when the *banjar* land had reached the level of *polaj*. Like Sher Shah, Akbar charged one-third of the produce as revenue and that, of course, in cash, though collections in kind were permitted in exceptional cases. Being a practical statesman, Akbar allowed various modes of assessment, such as *ghalla* or *baghi*, *batai*, *nasq* or *kankut*, and *zabti* or *naqdi* to prevail in different localities.³ The settlement was made direct with the cultivators and was, therefore, like Sher Shah's system, *rayatwari*. Every cultivator was given *patta* (title deed) and was required to sign a *qabuliyat* (deed of agreement). These documents contained a specification of the plots of land in the possession of a cultivator, their area and the rate of revenue he was required to pay. The state granted remission, if an unexpected calamity befell a village or a *pargana*. The extent of damage was carefully ascertained and a proportionate remission of revenue was ordered by the central government.

The work of revenue collection was entrusted to the government officials in the *parganas* and in districts, notably the *amil* or *amal-guzar*. The collectors were assisted by *qanungos*, *patwaris* and village headmen. Besides these, many survey officers and clerks were employed in every *pargana* to prepare seasonal crop statistics. The latter were paid, while

³ For these systems of assessment, see the author's *Sher Shah and His Successors*, pp. 73-74.

on active duty, daily allowances and ration. Probably a portion of the ration had to be borne by the peasantry. The *patwari*, who was a servant of the village community, was required to work in co-operation with them. The *qanungos* in the time of Akbar were State servants and were paid Rs. 20, 30 or 50 a month. For the guidance of *amins*, *shiqdars*, *amils*, *bitikchis* (*karkuns*) and other officials connected with survey of land, assessment of its produce, and collection of revenue, *dastur-ul-amals* or codes of 'Customary Practice' peculiar to every *pargana*, were laid down in writing. These were compiled by *qanungos* or hereditary revenue officers connected with various *parganas*. In addition to the *dastur-ul-amals* 'full and judicious' instructions were issued for the benefit of officers of the revenue department. These are compared by the historian Smith with Thomson's Directions to Collectors meant for district collectors of the British days in the country. The collectors were given a great deal of discretion. They were required to be friendly to the agriculturist, to advance loans (*taqavi*) to the needy peasants, and to recover them gradually. They were empowered to grant remissions in case of damage done to crops by natural calamity or other reasons in order to encourage cultivation. They were not to charge revenue except for the area under actual cultivation and to receive payment directly from the cultivators and not through intermediaries, such as headmen who were to be avoided as far as possible. They were to endeavour to recover arrears, but without using undue force. The special instruction given was that they should in every way possible advance the interests of the agriculturists and safeguard their rights. The collectors were required to send to the court a monthly statement of 'the conditions of the people, the state of public security, the range of market prices and rents, the condition of the poor, and all other contingencies.' The historian Smith is all praise for the system. "In short," writes he,

"the system was an admirable one. The principles were sound and the practical instructions to officials all that could be desired."⁴

While the land revenue settlement and the principles on which it was based have been highly praised by Anglo-Indian writers, who had been closely connected with the revenue administration of the government of India during the British rule, they have expressed doubt whether the revenue officials in the districts and *parganas* honestly enforced the imperial regulations. "But a person," observes V. A. Smith, "cannot help feeling considerable scepticism concerning the conformity of practice with precept. Even all the resources of the modern Anglo-Indian government often fail to secure such conformity, and in Akbar's time supervision undoubtedly was far less strict and searching." (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 377). Secondly, according to these writers, Akbar's assessment was extremely severe. While one must admit that 'conformity of practice with precept' is difficult to achieve, and that there was a great deal of official corruption in the revenue department, the regulations were probably more faithfully enforced by officials and complied with by the public than under the British rule. The standard of public morality and law-abidingness was, without doubt, higher among our people in the sixteenth century than in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. People considered it a religious duty to abide by their word, and paid off their debt in the second or third generation without even any legal document to enforce payment. Contemporary European observers were struck by the honesty of the common people in the 16th and 17th centuries and their habit to obey time-honoured rules and regulations without murmur. We know it for a fact that theft and robberies were far less frequent during the medieval period of our country's history than under

⁴ *Akbar the Great Mogul*, pp. 376-377.

the British rule and this in spite of the latter's much more highly organised police and espionage departments. It may, therefore, be legitimately inferred that the condition in every department of government including the revenue, was then not less satisfactory than in our days. In fact, popular tradition ascribes new devices of evasion of rules and resort to corruption to the system introduced by the British, during whose domination the pernicious practice spread from Bengal to the rest of the country. As regards the severity of the assessment it cannot be denied that Akbar's rates were higher than those obtaining during the ancient period in this country. It could hardly have been otherwise as almost all the Sultans of Delhi with the exception of Firoz Tuglak had charged higher rates and Sher Shah, too, famous though he was for his revenue settlement, had fixed one-third of the produce as the State demand and charged *jaribana*, *mahasilana* and insurance tax in addition. Akbar did not charge from the peasantry *jaribana*, *mahasilana* and insurance tax. As for the European view that the incidence of land tax was higher under Akbar than under the British, it should be noted that he did not recognise the existence of landlords and that the produce of the soil was shared between the government and the cultivator. Under the *zamindari* system, which obtained in most parts of the country during the British rule, the *zamindars* charged $1/2$ of the produce from the cultivator, while the sixteenth-century peasantry had to pay only $1/3$. Tradition as well as evidence confirms the opinion that the peasant was better off under Akbar than at any time under the British rule in this country. He has happily come to his own as the result of our agrarian legislation introduced after the 15th August of 1947.

Currency

During the early years of his reign Akbar adopted the currency system of his predecessors and made

only nominal modifications, such as the insertion of his name and titles and the place and years of mintage on his coins. His mints were in charge of minor officers called *chaudharis* and there was little co-ordination between various mints. In 1577, the Emperor undertook the reform of the currency and appointed Khwaja Abdus Samad Shirazi, a noted painter and calligraphist, to be the superintendent of the Imperial mint at Fatehpur Sikri. All the mints at provincial headquarters which had hitherto been under *chaudharis*, were placed under more responsible officers who were required to work under the supervision of Abdus Samad. The central staff under Abdus Samad consisted of a *darogha* (assistant superintendent), a *sarafi* (assayer), an *amin* (assistant to the *darogha*), a treasurer, a *mushrif* (accountant), a weighman, a melter of ore, a plate-maker and a merchant whose duty was to supply gold, silver and copper. A similar staff must have existed in each of the provincial mints at Lahore, Jaunpur, Ahmadabad, Patna and Tanda (in Bengal).

The mints issued gold, silver and copper coins. The silver coin known as the rupee was round in shape, like its modern successor, and weighed 1725 grains. Akbar also issued a square rupee called *Jalali*, but it was not so common and popular as the circular rupee. The rupee had its one-half, one-fourth, one-eighth, one-sixteenth, and one-twentieth pieces. The chief copper coin was the *dam* or *paisa* or *fulus*. It weighed 323.5 grains or almost 21 grams. The ratio between the *dam* and the rupee was 40 to 1. The lowest copper coin was the *jital*, and 25 *jitals* made one *paisa*. The most common gold coin was the *Ilahi* which was equal to ten rupees in value. The biggest gold coin was the *sahansah* which weighed a little over 101 tolas and must have been used in high business transactions. All the coins of various metals were characterised by 'purity of metal, fulness of weight and artistic

execution'. They bore calligraphic inscriptions containing the name and titles of the Emperor and the place and year of mintage. Only a few coins had figures inscribed upon them. They were probably intended to be commemorative medals.

Akbar is entitled to high praise for placing the currency on sound scientific foundation, and his coins have been highly spoken of by modern numismatists. "Akbar," writes V. A. Smith, "deserves high credit for the excellence of his extremely varied coinage, as regards purity of metal, fulness of weight and artistic execution. The Mogul coinage, when compared with that of Queen Elizabeth or other contemporary sovereigns in Europe, must be pronounced far superior on the whole. Akbar and his successors seem never to have yielded to the temptation of debasing the coins in either weight or purity. The gold in many of Akbar's coins is believed to be practically pure." (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 157).

Law and Justice

The medieval judicial system was based on Islamic law which divides the people into two classes—believers and non-believers—and does not recognise the latter as citizens of the State. The non-Muslims were suffered to live as *zimmi*s, i.e., the people living under contract, and certain disabilities and restrictions were imposed upon them. The king was required to administer the Islamic law in deciding all cases, whether the parties to a suit were Muslims or non-Muslims. But as it was not possible in actual practice to enforce Islamic law on the Hindus, who constituted a vast majority of the population and had a highly developed system of jurisprudence of their own, a compromise was effected, and while criminal cases continued to be decided according to Islamic law in all cases, Hindu law was administered in deciding civil and religious disputes of which the parties were Hindus. As over

seventy-five per cent of the people lived in villages which were in practice autonomous communities, the medieval Sultans had little to do with the administration of justice in the rural areas. In the cities they took cognisance of all cases arising out of any cause so far as the Muslim population was concerned, but as for the Hindus, only those causes that came within the scope of criminal law, which was applicable to Hindus and Muslims alike, went to the royal courts.

Although Akbar had rejected the Islamic theory of kingship, he made no fundamental change in the judicial system that he inherited from his predecessors. He, however, made minor changes in the system and reorganised it so as to make it efficient. An important change introduced by him was to restrict the scope of Islamic law and to extend that of general or customary law of the land so as to make it include as many cases as possible. For example, he did not apply the Islamic law of capital punishment for apostacy from Islam or for propagating Hinduism or Christianity. Thirdly, he appointed Hindu judges to decide the cases of Hindus. (*Badayuni*, Vol. II, p. 376).

The king was the highest judge in the empire. According to the immemorial custom of the East, he held court and decided cases in person. Usually, the king's court was the highest court of appeal; but sometimes, he decided initial cases also. Akbar spent some time every day in listening to complaints from the people and settling their disputes in a summary fashion. On Thursdays, he held a formal court of justice to hear and decide major cases, when besides parties to a suit, only high judicial officials and a few nobles noted for their probity and integrity were admitted. Although governors of provinces were empowered to pass the sentence of death on persons guilty of heinous crimes, they generally forwarded such cases of the Emperor who inflicted

the punishment in extreme cases. The royal orders had to be taken three times before the capital punishment could be executed.

The next judicial authority was the chief *qazi*, who was also almost invariably the chief *sadr* and was appointed by the Emperor and worked during his pleasure. He was paid his salary in cash and was, besides, given an assignment of land entitled *Madad-i-Maash* or subsistence allowance. Originally the chief *qazi's* main qualification used to be his knowledge of Islamic theology and his narrow sectarian views. But Akbar appointed to this post, men of liberal religious outlook and broad sympathies towards all sections of the people. The chief *qazi* appointed provincial, district and city *qazis*, subject to the approval of the Emperor. There were *qazis* at the headquarters of the *panchayats*, but none in small villages, wherein justice was administered by the people's *panchayats*. There was a separate *qazi* for the army whose jurisdiction was limited to the army. Sometimes, more than one *qazi* was appointed in a city with defined jurisdiction for each. There were *muftis* to assist the *qazis*, their main duty was to interpret the law and issue a *fatwa*. When a *qazi* himself possessed qualifications of issuing *fatwa*, he naturally did not require the assistance of a *mufti*. In most important towns, there were *muhtasibs* who examined weights and measures, prevented gambling and drinking and saw that Muslims offered their five daily prayers and kept the Ramzan fasts. Thus he, too, performed judicial duties and enforced social legislation. There were *mir adls* at the capital and provincial headquarters but not in small towns or *parganas*. Their duties were similar to those of the *qazis*.

Besides deciding cases, the *qazi's* duty was to inspect the jails and review the conditions of prisoners. He was empowered to discharge prisoners deserving freedom, but not without a careful exa-

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mination of their cases. The *qazi* was also the trustee of *waqfs* in his jurisdiction. While trying cases, he was instructed to have the evidence recorded by the court clerks, to frame charge-sheet and read it out to the culprit. Witnesses had to be examined and the culprit was given an opportunity to defend himself. *Akbar* emphasised the necessity of studying the psychology and physiognomy of culprits and invariably instructed the judges to ascertain the truth by cross examination.

The organisation of the courts and their relations to one another were rather crude. The higher courts, including those of the king and the chief *qazi*, not only heard appeals but also decided initial cases. It was not necessary that an appeal from a city court should go to the district or provincial court, before reaching the court of the chief *qazi*. Sometimes, an appeal from the city court lay to the district court, sometimes to the provincial court and at others to the chief *qazi*'s court and even direct to the king's court. Secondly, the same type of cases were decided by a number of officers and it was not specified as to which type or category of cases should be heard by the lower courts. For example, not only the *qazi* but also the *mir adl* and the governor of a province administered criminal cases involving exactly the same kind of guilt. Civil justice was administered by *qazis*, *mir adls* and *diwans* of provinces. Thirdly, there was no separation of executive and judicial functions, and executive officers like the governor and the *diwan* were entrusted with judicial administration also. Fourthly, the law was not properly codified. The Hindu and Muslim personal laws, that is, those relating to inheritance, marriage, divorce, etc., were given in law books of the two communities, but the customary law of the land was not committed to writing and was applied at the discretion of the judges. Fifthly, according to modern standards the criminal

law was very severe and punishments inflicted were out of proportion to the guilt.

Islamic law, which was applied in deciding criminal cases, recognises four kinds of punishment : (1) *Qisas*, i.e., retaliation which was applied to cases of killing and wounding ; (2) *Diya* or compensation which, too, was applied to cases of murder or wounding ; (3) *Hadd* or punishment unambiguously prescribed by the Muslim law for offences relating to adultery and (4) *Tazir* or punishment inflicted by the judge at his discretion. *Tazir* related to crimes which did not come under the category of *Hadd*.

The punishments usually inflicted were : imprisonment for various terms, internment and fines, confiscation of property, flogging, mutilation of limbs, banishment and execution. Capital punishment in most cases was inflicted by the Emperor, though provincial governors were authorised to pass the sentence of death for grave offences, such as adultery, treason, sedition and murder. A criminal was usually thrown under the feet of an elephant and trampled to death.

Prisons

There were two kinds of prisons, one for prisoners of high rank and the other for ordinary criminals. Important nobles and princes, guilty of treason and rebellions, were imprisoned in the fortresses situated in different parts of the country, the prominent among them being those at Gwalior, Ranthambhor, Rohtas, Bhakkar and Bayana. There were jails at the capital and at the headquarters of the provinces, districts and the *parganas*. Besides regular prisoners, undertrials were also kept confined in jails. The jails were frequently inspected by high officials of the judicial department who inquired into the condition of the prisoners and released those of them who had suffered enough. Sometimes, the Emperor paid visits to the prison-houses at the

capital, while the governors inspected the provincial jails. Conditions of accommodation, sanitation, health and diet of prisoners in jails were not as satisfactory as they are today.

The Police System

Akbar's police administration was well-organised and efficient. The police may be divided into three categories of urban, district and village police. In all the cities and towns of the empire, there were *kotwals* charged with the duty of maintaining public order and decency. The *kotwal's* functions have already been enumerated. He was both the head of the city police and committing and trying magistrate. He had to apprehend thieves, robbers, and other petty criminals and to punish them. His main duty was to see that the life of the city continued undisturbed. Besides, he had to examine weights and measures, keep an eye on the currency and to enforce Akbar's social legislation. He was held personally responsible for the value of the property stolen in case he failed to discover the thief. He was authorised to inflict on offenders punishment which included torture, mutilation of limbs and flogging. He was, however, not empowered to inflict the penalty of death. In short, the *kotwal's* duties were quite comprehensive and his powers wide and despotic. In the district, law and order was maintained by the *faujdar* who was assisted in his work by the *amils* and other revenue officers of the *parganas*. Of course, the *faujdar* had a *kotwal* at the district headquarters to take charge of the police duty of the city. The *faujdar's* main duties were the policing of roads of the district and suppressing disorders of all kinds. Like the *kotwal* he was responsible for producing the stolen property, if he failed to trace the thief. He possessed the power of dealing summarily with disturbances, and in normal times he successfully maintained peace and tranquillity. There were more than one *thanas* or police stations in every

pargana. As for the police administration of the villages, Akbar, following the immemorial custom of the country, established the principle of local responsibility. The village headman was required to discover the thieves and robbers within a specified time. In the event of his failure, he had to make good the loss from his own pocket. If a crime occurred on the boundary of more than one village, the headmen of the villages concerned were held responsible for it. Usually, the entire village was answerable for every crime and was laid under contribution for making good the loss. There was, however, a *chaukidar* for every village for normal police work.

The police arrangement under Akbar was fairly efficient and maintained a high standard of public order and tranquillity. It will, however, be idle to imagine that there were no cases of theft, immorality, cheating or disturbances of public peace. There were professional thieves and robbers in the hills and the jungles who descended to the plains to ply their trade whenever there was lack of vigilance on the part of the local police. Though they are exaggerated in some particulars, the accounts of contemporary European travellers yield a fairly accurate picture of the state of the country in the second half of the sixteenth century. But in view of the law-abidingness and the high morality of the people and the severity of the penal law the standard of public security was not lower than it is in our time.

Education

In the sixteenth century, no government in any country in the world considered it to be its duty to educate the public. Even England recognised this duty as late as 1870. Akbar was, however, far in advance of his age, and made an attempt to raise the intellectual level of the people. Although he did not establish a network of schools and colleges all over the country for the benefit of the school-going population and did not allocate a fixed percentage of

the state revenue for expenditure on public education, yet he encouraged education in diverse ways. There were in his empire, primary and secondary schools, and even colleges. Some of them were established and maintained by government, while others depended upon private philanthropy. There was a *maktab* or primary school attached to every mosque where elementary reading, writing and arithmetic, besides the Quran, were thought. In addition to these, there were *madrasas* which might be called secondary schools or colleges. Akbar established colleges at Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Delhi and some other places and richly endowed them. His example was followed by his courtiers. Quite early in his reign, Maham Anaga had built a *madrasa* near the western gate of *Purana Qila* at Delhi. Khwaja Muin established a college at Delhi. There were many such colleges in all important towns with a sufficiently large Muslim population. In these colleges, Islamic theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, logic and astronomy were taught by distinguished teachers, some of whom had received education outside India. There were schools and higher centres of learning for the Hindus in every part of the country. In spite of the destruction wrought by the iconoclastic zeal of the early Turkish invaders, Hindu centres of learning had not completely disappeared. There was a remarkable revival of our ancient learning during the age of Akbar. There was a school in every village and, in fact, a school attached to every temple where reading, writing and arithmetic and religious books were taught. In higher centres of learning, Hindu theology, Sanskrit, grammar, philosophy, literature, logic, astronomy, higher mathematics and other sciences were studied. Akbar made an attempt to revise the curriculum and to include certain important subjects in the courses of study meant for grown up boys at schools and colleges. These subjects were science of morals and social behaviour, arithmetic, notations peculiar

to arithmetic, agriculture, mensuration, geometry, astronomy, physiognomy and foretelling, household economy, public administration, medicine, logic, and *tabi*, the *riyazi* and the *illahi* sciences and history. Students of Sanskrit were required to study grammar, philology, logic, Vedanta and Patanjali. These were to be studied gradually. The teacher was only to assist the pupils to learn. Students were particularly advised to commit moral precepts⁵ and sayings to memory, and no one was to neglect "those things which the present time required." Probably, colleges were required to specialise in some of the above subjects. It is unlikely that every institution was required to teach all the above subjects. Another reform introduced was to open the *madrasas* to Hindus. For the first time in medieval India, Hindus and Musalmans received their education in common schools and read the same books. The reform was necessitated by the fact that Akbar had made Persian compulsory for all the state officials and by his desire to create a common nationality.

V. A. Smith erroneously supposes that the reform had no relation to facts and was, therefore, unreal and useless. The system produced remarkable men in every walk of life who contributed to the success of the later days of Akbar and of the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan and were able enough to shed lustre on any age and any country. This is enough to show that the reform had proved efficacious. Akbar's court was a centre of learning and art. The Emperor, his courtiers and officials were liberal patrons of letters. The age consequently witnessed a cultural renaissance of a high order. Works of high literary value were produced in various subjects, particularly on historiography. The Hindi poetry of Akbar's age is unrivalled, and has become classical for all time. Such high production would

⁵ *Ain* 25 vide, *Ain-i-Akbari* (Blochmann), Vol. I, pp. 278-279.

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have been impossible without proper educational organisation and atmosphere.

The court played a very important part in the Emperor's scheme of the propagation of education and culture. Akbar encouraged men of letters and arts to produce standard scientific and literary works on a variety of subjects. Books on religion, philosophy, literature, biography, history, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and other subjects were brought out in large numbers. Poetry was not neglected. Fine arts like architecture, music and painting were also encouraged. Inspired by the laudable ambition of creating common culture, Akbar established a Translation Department and had outstanding works in Sanskrit, Arabic and Turki rendered into Persian, so as to enable the Hindus and Muslims to know the best in each other's religion and culture. For the above purpose, the services of high-ranking scholars above purpose, the services of high-ranking scholars in the country were requisitioned. Many famous scholars from outside India were also invited to assist the indigenous talent in the above work. Many a Sanskrit treatise, including the *Vedas* and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, was rendered into Persian. Arabic works of repute on Muslim theology and arts were also translated into Persian. A school of Indian historiography was founded and a large number of histories were written by eminent historians. Libraries were opened. The royal library in the palace was one of the most wonderful institutions of the kind in the world. It consisted of many thousand books all of which were manuscripts sumptuously bound and beautifully illustrated. The books were classified according to their subject-matter and the language in which they were written. There were Sanskrit, Persian, Greek, Kashmiri and Arabic works.

Hindi, which was coming into prominence, was patronised. Although the education as planned by Akbar was through the medium of Persian which

was the court language and compulsory for state servants, schools attached to temples and private institutions founded and maintained by the Hindus must have imparted knowledge through the medium of Hindi. The measures undertaken by the Emperor indicated a desire on his part to raise the moral and intellectual standard of the people. It must, however, be admitted that the scheme was meant mainly for the upper and middle class people.

Religious Policy

It has been shown in a previous chapter that the inquistive Akbar made a scientific examination of various religions then known in India, and that his enquiry led him to the conclusion that there was truth in every religion. He thought it undesirable, therefore, that a comparatively young religion like Islam should be considered to possess the monopoly of Truth and continue as the religion of the State. Hence, he abolished Islam as the religion of the State and established in its place, a religion of his own choice known as the *Din-i-Ilahi*. This new religion which may be compared to an advance form of *Sufism*, was an eclectic faith and consisted of good principles culled from every religion. It was based on 'reason' and not the 'authority of any man'. It was Akbar's policy not to impose his religion by force on his subjects. It was, therefore, confined to the court circle and had just a few thousand followers. Even after the establishment of the *Din-i-Ilahi*, Akbar pursued the policy of giving full religious toleration to his people. It was but natural for a monarch, who believed that there was truth in every religion and that there was the same God everywhere, whether He be worshipped in a church, a mosque, a temple, or a synagogue, to treat all religions alike and to give the followers of every faith complete freedom of conscience and worship. Contrary to the practice which had existed since the advent of Islam in the country, Hindus were permit-

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ted to perform public worship and to preach their religion. Those Hindu men, women and children who were forcibly converted to Islam were allowed to go back to their ancestral religion, if any liked. Christians were allowed to build churches and proselytise Hindus and Muslims to Christianity. No kind of disability was imposed on any one on account of his faith. State employment was open to all people irrespective of their race, caste or religious belief. These religious reforms appeared revolutionary inasmuch as they brought down Islam from its position of dominance which it had enjoyed for centuries, to one of equality with other religions. Its important followers, particularly the *ulema* who had hitherto presumed to guide the State and shape its religious policy, were greatly disturbed at the change. They levelled charges of irreligiosity and even apostacy against Akbar and instigated the Muslim public to rebel against him. Early in 1580, Mullah Muhammad Yazdi, the *qazi* of Jaunpur, issued a *fatwa* to the effect that the Emperor had ceased to be a Muslim, and rebellion against him was lawful. About this very time, Akbar had introduced certain administrative reforms, such as, conversion of *jagir* lands into *khalisa* (reserve) land and cutting down of allowances of imperial officers. The discontent caused by these reforms persuaded some of the high imperial officers in Bihar and Bengal to join hands with the disaffected and humiliated Muslim theologians, and they broke out into a fearful rebellion. The immediate political effect of Akbar's policy of religious toleration was not good, and involved the country in a civil war; but the Emperor was not to be cowed down into surrender and abandonment of the statesmanlike policy of treating all religions alike. He put down the rebellion and severely chastised the malcontents. The policy of absolute religious toleration stood the test and continued throughout his reign and with some modification down to the time of Aurangzeb.

Some modern scholars, notably V. A. Smith and Wolseley Haig, have held that, while Akbar gave complete religious toleration to other faiths, he persecuted Islam. This view is based on the prejudicial statements of the Jesuit missionaries and of the historian Badayuni. The former, in their anxiety to show to their superiors in Goa and Lisbon the success of their mission that the Emperor was well on the way to embrace Christianity, sent highly exaggerated and even false reports to them. They informed the credulous Christians of Europe that he had not only abandoned Islam, but was persecuting it. Badayuni was a bigoted *mullah* in whose eyes justice and fairness shown to other religions was tantamount to injustice to and persecution of Islam. As has been mentioned, the very fact that Islam had ceased to be the State religion gave mortal offence to its orthodox followers. They denounced as persecution of Islam such unexceptionable measures as the giving of equal privileges to every faith for the propagation of its principles and the allowing of freedom to the converts to revert to their original religions, if they liked. Badayuni gives a long list of the so-called measures of persecution. They are :

- (1) Akbar made it obligatory to wear silk dresses and ornaments at prayer time.
- (2) He forbade Islamic prayers.
- (3) He stopped the call to prayer in the Assembly Hall.
- (4) He prohibited Muslim fasts.
- (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca was prohibited.
- (6) Muslim festivals were discontinued.
- (7) No one was allowed to give the name of Muhammad and Ahmad to his children.
- (8) Mosques were plundered and converted into stables.
- (9) Shaving of beards was allowed.
- (10) Flesh of wild boars, pigs and tigers was permitted.

- (11) Study of Arabic was discouraged.
- (12) Those who killed cows and other animals on prohibited days were punished, sometimes with capital punishment.

A critical examination of the charges makes it clear that most of them were groundless. If Akbar had forbidden Islamic prayers, it was superfluous to order silk dresses and ornaments to be worn at the prayer time. We know from Badayuni's own book and from the writings of the Jesuit missionaries that Muslim call to prayer and five daily prayers were common enough throughout Akbar's reign. It is ridiculous to imagine that the masses should have been ordered not to keep the fast of Ramzan. Similarly, pilgrimage to Mecca continued to be undertaken as before. We know it from several sources, including the Jesuit missionaries, that, as late as 1585 many men and women were permitted to proceed to Mecca. The celebration of Muslim festivals and the naming of Muhammad and Ahmad were commonplace things throughout Akbar's reign, as is clear from the statement of many a contemporary writer. There is no concrete instance to show that mosques were plundered or converted into stables. Unlike Hindu temples, mosques possess no articles of value and as such, they are not worth plundering. It may be that at the time of war a mosque might have been utilised for military purposes. In view of our knowledge that hundreds of mosques remained and were utilised as places of worship, it seems too much to believe that any general order for their conversion into stables could have been given. We know from many paintings of the later days of Akbar's reign that the Emperor's nobles and courtiers continued to grow beards. If Akbar shaved his beard and his example was followed by some of his courtiers, it should not be taken to be an instance of the persecution of Islam. Similarly, flesh of boars was not forced on any one. Probably, those who ate

it were not hated or punished. Akbar emphasised the study of Persian and patronised Sanskrit and Hindi. No order was issued banning Arabic. The fanatics like Badayuni thought that the encouragement of Sanskrit amounted to a ban on Arabic. It is, thus, clear that Akbar made no attempt to persecute the religion of his ancestors. What he really did was to bring it down to the level of other religions and to look upon Muhammad as *a* prophet and not *the* Prophet so far as he personally was concerned.

Public Services

The Mughal imperial service, which conducted the administration so efficiently and made Akbar's reign brilliant, cannot be called national. It was mostly foreign in personnel and consisted of Turks, Mongols, Uzbeks, Persians, Arabs and Afghans, with a little sprinkling of Indian Muhammadans and Hindus. According to Blochmann, 70 per cent of Akbar's senior officials were foreigners, who had either come from Central Asia for service or had settled in this country for one or two generations. Most of them had accompanied Babar and Humayun to our land and attached themselves to the ruling family. Akbar had thrown open the higher services to the Hindus; but the number of Hindus holding high civil and military posts was comparatively very small. Nor was the proportion of Indian Muhammadans in any way high. Among the Hindus who held high posts Rajputs predominated. In spite of Akbar's policy of "India for the Indians," the Mughal imperial service remained a heterogeneous institution, mainly foreign in personnel, till the end of his reign.

Admission to the service was based on merit and fitness. Race, caste and creed played little part in the recruitment of its members. Sometimes political considerations obliged the emperor to appoint certain men to high posts in the imperial service. But even these men were not promoted to the higher rank

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unless they had shown themselves competent by approved service and loyalty. All the members of the imperial service were given the designation of *mansabdars* and their rank, position and emoluments were determined by the *mansabs* which they held. Promotion depended upon approved service and not on seniority or pay. The Emperor reserved to himself the right of promoting or degrading the highest officers including the ministers, at will. Even the prime minister could be degraded to the post of governor or even to a lesser rank. Prime minister Muzaffar Khan was sent to Bengal as its governor and Raja Todar Mal, after having served as prime minister, was, subsequently, transferred to the post of a governor. Such examples were by no means rare. It was not necessary that an officer holding a small post should pass through various stages before his appointment to the highest post in a particular branch of service. In all cases, continuance in a high post or promotion was not possible without approved service and unflinching loyalty.

The imperial service was organised on bureaucratic principle. It was military in organisation and outlook. As has been shown in connection with an account of the army, every official was the holder of a *mansab* or official appointment of rank and profit. He was required to maintain a contingent of troops and auxiliaries and furnish the same for service of the State whenever called upon to do so. The members of the service, called *mansabdars*, were classified into 33 grades which ranged from the *mansab* of 10 to that of 100,000. Thus, the imperial service was organised on definite military lines and its members were expected to perform military duties in addition to their main work, administrative or judicial. Like all bureaucracies, it was highly efficient and loyal.

There was little specialisation of appointments. Services were not clearly demarcated as adminis-

trative, revenue or judicial. In fact, there was no distinction between civil and military services even. Any officer was at any time liable to be transferred to an altogether new form of employment. For example, Raja Todar Mal, who was essentially a financier of the highest ability, was transferred more than once to act as a governor and even as a military commander. Abul Fazl, the eminent scholar and historian, was sent on a diplomatic mission and also had to conduct a military expedition in the Deccan. Raja Birbal, who was no more than a gifted court wit, was ordered to lead an expedition against the tribal Pathans. There was no separate educational or medical service, though teachers and physicians were employed as imperial servants.

Generally speaking, the officials were divided into two broad divisions, namely, (1) those who served the Emperor at court and (2) the others who held definite appointments, whether at the capital or in the provinces. The names of both kinds of officers were recorded in separate registers and the officers who were required to attend at court were expected to keep themselves in readiness to carry out any orders that the Emperor might give. They had their own troops which, too, were kept ready for service. The officials whose names were recorded in another register were meant for governorship or other positions in the provinces and districts, or posts in the imperial secretariate or household department.

The officials were either paid by grant of *jagirs* or in cash from the royal treasury. Akbar preferred the latter mode of payment; but as payment by grant of *jagirs* had come down from the past, he could not abolish the system altogether. But the number of officers who were paid their salaries by assignment of land was, however, very small towards the end of his reign. The salaries and allowances of the officials were enormous. A first grade *mansabdar* of five thousand was paid Rs. 30,000 a month.

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a second grade *mansabdar* of the same class received Rs. 29,000 a month, and a third grade official of that rank got Rs. 28,000 a month. The officials were, however, required to pay out of their salaries the cost of their military establishments. If the cost of the establishment of a *mansabdar* of five thousand would, on a rough estimate, be Rs. 18,000, that of one thousand was Rs. 5,000, and that of five hundred Rs. 1,000 a month. In Akbar's time, the payments were made for all the 12 months of the year.

The Mughal public service, though well-organised, suffered from certain drawbacks. In the first place there were no regular rules of appointment, promotion or dismissal. Secondly, fixity of tenure was not guaranteed. This led to intrigues and sometimes to neglect of duty. It was the Emperor's pleasure to appoint or promote any one he liked. Akbar, who possessed the never-failing quality of judging human character at sight, almost invariably chose the right kind of officers and promoted only those who deserved it. But under his successors, who were less gifted rulers, the imperial service began to deteriorate. Thirdly, the cost of maintaining the fixed quota of troops and auxiliaries was very heavy. On account of the tradition of a luxuriously high standard of living and their own position in life, imperial officials of the upper grades were required to be extravagant and there was, therefore, no incentive to thrift. The average officer spent large sums on luxuries, banquets and presents, and was obliged to exploit poor people.

In spite of these drawbacks, the Mughal Imperial service, under Akbar, was one of the most highly organised, talented, loyal and efficient services then known to the world. It carried out the imperial policy expeditiously and made Akbar's reign successful and brilliant.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

The Country and the People

India of the time of Akbar was very much like that of today. There were, of course, no railways nor the canal systems of the Punjab and the modern Uttar Pradesh. River-valley projects and industrial and technological developments of independent India were unthinkable in the medieval age. There were no metalled roads. The various parts of the country and most of the important towns were connected by *kacha* roads, shaded by trees on either side of them, and clearly demarcated by *sarais* meant for merchants and travellers to spend the night in security. Navigable rivers, such as the Indus, the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Ghagra and the rivers of Bengal were frequently used for traffic and transport of troops and goods. There were more forests in the time of Akbar than now. This was particularly the case in the districts of Gorakhpur, Gonda, Lakimpur Kheri and Bijnaur in the modern Uttar Pradesh and in several parts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Owing to the presence of forests, wild animals were seen even in some parts of the Gangetic Plains. Elephants were common in the country south of the Ganga and the Yamuna. Lions and tigers could be shot in some parts of Malwa, and rhinoceroses and tigers were sometimes seen in the forests of the Gangetic Plain. Akbar had an extensive hunting ground near Agra where various kinds of wild games were bagged. The presence of large forests and gardens was responsible for greater rainfall and pro-

ductivity than we have them now-a-days. Apart from these, the general aspect of the country did not materially differ from that of today. The country side was dotted with numerous villages close to one another and was full of people. The modern towns of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Karachi had not come into existence. Ancient capitals like Kanauj and Vijayanagar were in a state of decay. The most flourishing cities in Akbar's time were Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Delhi, Allahabad, Banaras, Lucknow, Lahore, Multan, Ujjain, Ahmadabad, Ajmer, Patna, Rajmahal and Dacca. All these were very populous and prosperous. Large gardens were found in all parts of the country, particularly in the vicinity of big towns. Not only the countryside but also the towns, as Monserrate says, looked beautiful from a distance.

The country was thickly populated with extensive patches of forests and uninhabited land interspersed here and there ; but the density of population was much less than it is today. The population was not homogeneous. Hindus, of course, formed the great majority and were divided mostly to the Rajput, Brahman, Kayastha and Vaish castes and they did not interdine and intermarry among themselves and the caste system was much more rigorous than in our time. Rajputs, as a rule, were military-men and their tribal leaders were high-ranking *mansabdars* in the imperial service. The Brahmans were engaged in priestly profession or in that of teaching, while the Vaish formed the mercantile community. Kayasthas were engaged largely as clerks, secretaries and revenue officers. Some of the Rajputs, belonging to the lower classes, also seemed to have been fond of highway robbery. The Muhammadans were sharply divided into two sections, namely, (1) those who had come for employment in the Mughal service or for trade and commerce from Arabia,

Persia and other countries, and (2) those who were converts from the indigenous Hindu population or descendants of early converts. The number of the latter class was naturally fairly large. The foreign Muhammadan traders from Arabia and Persia had formed their settlements at the sea-ports. Those who had come for service were found mostly in Northern India and a smaller number at the courts of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golkunda. Foreign Muslims predominated at Akbar's court. Besides the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks, the Mongols and the Uzbeks, there were some Abyssinians and Armenians. As the country was open to foreign adventurers and there was no check on immigration, men of many nationalities from Europe and Asia, such as, the Portuguese, the English, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Turks and the Jewish people, were found in the country. The Jews, like the Armenians, formed a small and powerful section of the trading community. Parsis, though small in number, wielded some influence at Akbar's court. They had not yet taken to commerce and were engaged in agriculture or carpentry. They were settled in Nausari and other districts in Gujarat. As regards the Europeans, only the Portuguese held an important position, as they were masters of Goa and some other places on our Western Coast. They also possessed trading stations at the mouths of the Indus and the Ganga.

Our Cities

We have fairly sufficient material for forming a concrete picture of the economic institutions and the condition of the people during the reign of Akbar. The *Ain-i-Akbari*, supplemented by some other works in Persian, and the accounts of contemporary European travellers, merchants and writers, throw a flood of light on the economic condition of the country. There were many big and prosperous cities in the empire. The most important of these were Delhi,

Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Ajmer, Lahore, Multan, Ujjain, Burhanpur, Ahmadabad, Banaras, Allahabad, Patna, Raj Mahal, Burdwan, Hugli, Dacca and Chatgaon. European travellers were struck by the size, wealth and prosperity of our cities. "Agra and Fatehpore," writes Fitch in 1585, "are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and very populous. Between Agra and Fatehpore are 22 miles, and all the way is a market of victuals and other things as full as though a man were still in a town, and so many people as if a man were in a market." According to Monserrate, Lahore was one of the largest cities in the world and second to none in Europe or in Asia. Delhi was even larger than Lahore. Jaunpur and Allahabad were prosperous towns, and Banaras was one of the most ancient, populous and prosperous cities in the world. Burhanpur in Khandesh was very large and wealthy. Abul Fazl describes Ahmadabad as "a noble city in a high state of prosperity" which "for the pleasantness of its climate and its display of the choicest production of the whole globe is almost unrivalled." Patna in Bihar was the largest city of that province. In Bengal the most important towns were Raj Mahal, Burdwan, Hugli, Dacca and Chitgaon. It is clear from the testimony of contemporary foreign travellers that the urban population in the time of Akbar was well-to-do.

Communications

Important towns in the country were connected by roads which were unmetalled but kept in good condition except during the rainy season. The roads had rows of trees on either side of them and there were walled *sarais* for travellers and merchants. Our rivers, many of which were navigable throughout the year, were used for transport of goods and traffic. Some of the rivers had bridges at important places. Munim Khan had built a bridge on the Gomti at Jaunpur in the early days of Akbar's

reign. There was, thus, no want of communications, and roads and rivers were used for traffic throughout the year. As in the time of Sher Shah, royal *dak* was carried by *harkaras* who were posted at every *sarai*. News travelled at the rate of 70 to 80 miles a day.

Agricultural and other Products

Agriculture provided the means of livelihood to a vast majority of the people. It was carried on in much the same manner as today. Besides, the usual crops, such as wheat, barley, gram, peas and oil-seeds, superior crops like sugarcane, indigo and poppy were cultivated in many parts of the country. There was localisation of crops, as in our own days. Sugarcane was cultivated in many parts of the modern Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar. Indigo crop was raised in many places in Northern India and particularly in Central India. Cotton was also grown in most places. Agricultural implements and tools were the same as now. Artificial irrigation, however, was absent in the days of Akbar. Nevertheless, the country was self-sufficient in agricultural products and corn had not to be imported from outside even in times of scarcity. Among the non-agricultural products, fisheries, minerals, salt, opium and liquor were most important. Fish was caught in large quantities and was abundantly cheap. Iron was produced in many parts of the country and was extensively used for making tools, implements, arms, etc. There were copper mines in Rajasthan and Central India which produced large quantities of the metal in Akbar's time. Salt came from Sambhar Lake and from the hills of the Punjab. It was also manufactured at many places from seawater. Opium was extensively cultivated in Malwa and Bihar, and, in spite of Akbar's prohibitory orders, liquor was produced from *tadi* and *mahua* at many places. Saltpetre was also manufactured, as it was much in demand for munition.

Industries and Crafts

The most important industry was the cultivation of cotton and manufacture of cotton-cloth. Cotton industry was known to every village. There were everywhere cotton corders and weavers; but the principal centres of cotton manufacture were Jaunpur, Banaras, Patna, Burhanpur, Lucknow, Khairabad and Akbarpur, and many other places in the modern Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Bengal and Orissa. In fact, the entire country was familiar with this industry and the tract from Orissa to the North-Eastern Frontier and Bengal "looked like a big cotton factory." Dacca was particularly reputed for its delicate cotton fabrics. It produced large quantities of muslin, the finest cloth of cotton then known to our people. The subsidiary dyeing industry flourished side by side with the cotton industry. Edward Terry was struck by the beautiful and fast dyes produced in the country. He says that clothes were dyed or printed with "a variety of well-shaped and well-coloured flowers or figures which are so fixed on the cloth that no water can wash them out." Silk-weaving industry was also in a flourishing condition. Akbar's patronage gave impetus to this industry. Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore were important centres of silk weaving and in many towns of Gujarat and Bengal large quantities of silk fabrics were produced. Next in importance were the shawl and carpet-weaving industries. Kashmir was the main centre of weaving industries. Shawls and carpets were produced also at Lahore and Agra and some other towns. Manufacture of woollen goods was done in some places where blankets and other woollen articles were produced; but this industry was not so common as those of silk and cotton. The textile industry provided occupation to quite a vast portion of our population next in number only to those who depended upon agriculture. Besides, there were many other small industries, such as the manufacture of wooded bed-

steads, chests, boxes, stools and almirahs ; of leather goods ; of pottery, of paper and bricks. Terry says that he saw "many curious boxes, trunks, stand-dishes (pen-cases), carpets with excellent manufactures in the markets." Artistically designed and ornamented desks, writing cases and ivory works, were also produced. Manufacture of arms, swords, arrows, bows, spears, javelins, guns and muskets was a flourishing industry, as was that of saltpetre, which was used in the making of gunpowder. These industries were financed mostly by rich merchants, who also made arrangements for their transport to foreign lands. The State, no doubt, encouraged the manufacture of goods of various kinds on a large scale, and there were attached to the court many workshops or *karkhanas* in which many hundreds of men were employed.

Foreign Trade

During the reign of Akbar, our country had an active and considerable foreign trade with many countries of Asia and Europe. Akbar took keen interest in the foreign sea-borne trade and did all that was possible in that age to foster the economic prosperity of the country. The chief exports were textiles, specially various kinds of cotton fabrics, pepper, indigo, opium and various kinds of drugs and miscellaneous goods. The chief imports from foreign countries were bullion, horses, metals, silk, ivory, coral, amber, precious stones, silk cloth, velvet, brocade, broad cloth, perfumes, drugs, China goods, especially porcelain, African slaves, and European wines. Chinese porcelain found much favour with Akbar and his Muslim courtiers and was, therefore, much in demand. Glass vessels were also imported from abroad, probably from Venice. Among the exports, textiles were the most important. Besides providing the need of the people in the land, the country supplied cotton cloth of many varieties to Africa, Arabia, Egypt, Burma, Malacca,

the Straits and several other countries of Asia. Our cotton goods were also much in demand in European countries, such as Italy, France, England and Germany. The principal outlets for foreign sea-borne trade were Cambay, Surat and Broach in Gujarat, Lahori Bandar in Sindh, Bassein, Chaul, Dabul (modern Bhabol) in the Ratnagiri District, Goa and Bhatkal, Calicut, and Cochin in Malabar and Negapatam, Masulipatam and some other ports on the East Coast. In Bengal, the most important ports were Satgaon, Sripur, Chitgaon and Sonargaon. Besides these sea routes, there were two main land routes for export trade. They lay from Lahore to Kabul and beyond, and from Multan to Kandhar and beyond. But the sea routes, which were comparatively secure and advantageous, were more frequently used than the land routes. The State charged low custom duties. At Surat, $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent duty was charged on all exports and imports of goods and 2 per cent on gold and silver. It had become a fixed rule with the government not to permit export of precious metals. No merchant was allowed to export gold or silver. On the other hand, large quantities of gold and silver and other precious metals were imported from abroad every year. The balance of trade invariably was in our favour.

Prices

Things of daily use, such as corn, vegetables, fruits, ghee, milk, butter, oil, fish, mutton and articles of clothing and other commodities of common use were very cheap. Edward Terry says that "plenty of all provisions" was "very great throughout the whole monarchy," "everyone there may eat bread without scarceness." The normal rate of wheat was 12 maunds a rupee. Barley sold 8 maunds, best rice 10 maunds, mung 18 maunds, mash 16 maunds and salt 16 maunds. A sheep could be had for a rupee and a half or even less than that. Mutton sold 17 seers a rupee, and milk 44 seers a rupee. Daily

wages of workers were also low. An unskilled labourer was paid 2 *dams*, that is, $\frac{1}{20}$ of a rupee per day, a carpenter got 7 *dams*, that is, $\frac{7}{40}$ of a rupee and other skilled workmen got 7 *dams* a day. The effect of all round cheapness and low prices was that the common man could get his means of subsistence without difficulty. The historian Smith is of opinion that "the hired landless labourer in the time of Akbar and Jahangir probably had more to eat than he has now." Moreland, on the other hand, thinks that "speaking generally, the masses lived on the same economic plane as now." The truth seem to be that although the income of the common man during Akbar's time was not high, he did not suffer from starvation, nor did he feel the pinch of want of corn and other necessities of life which were plentiful and cheap. Moreover, common people had fewer needs than their successors of today.

Economic System

An important factor in the economic system during the reign of Akbar and, in fact, throughout the Mughal period was a wide gulf separating producers from consumers. The producers consisted of agriculturists, industrial workers and traders. The consuming classes were the nobles and the officers of the civil and military services, the professional and religious classes, servants and slaves, and beggars. There was superfluity of officers and domestic servants. The State and the private households could have easily done with a lesser number of officials and servants. It was the fashion with rich people to be surrounded by a crowd of retainers and menial servants. Similarly, there was a large number of religious mendicants and beggars who performed no useful function, and, consequently, a large portion of the State income was wasted on superfluous services, the cost of which had to be borne by the producing classes. The nobles and officers were paid very high salaries and they spent money lavishly on

articles of luxury and display. They were fond of sumptuous dishes, costly dresses, precious jewellery, elephants and horses. They spent extravagantly on marriages of their sons and daughters, on buildings, mausoleums and mosques, and on curious articles purchased from foreign countries. Their extravagant living led most of them into debt, and compelled them to extort money from the peasantry. The middle class people, consisting of professional classes and ordinary State employees, were fairly well off. The upper and middle class merchants were also economically prosperous, specially those who had the good luck to attach themselves to the imperial court or to some prominent nobles or officials. It seems that skilled workmen earned sufficient to lead a decent life, but the condition of unskilled workers, peons and low shopkeepers was not good. The workmen and peons were paid low wages and had to put up with ill-treatment and even oppression. Thus, the lower class people were poor and denied even ordinary comforts. They resided in mud-houses, as now, and had very few belongings.

Famines

In a country where crops depend upon rainfall the failure of seasonal rains is almost invariably followed by a famine. North-Western India suffered from a severe famine in 1555-56, that is, the first year of Akbar's reign. It was accompanied with a pestilence which took a heavy toll of human life. For about six months during 1573-74, Gujarat suffered from a famine and many of the inhabitants of the province had to migrate to other parts of the country. During 1595-96, scarcity of rainfall brought about a famine in Kashmir and the Punjab where many people died of starvation. Bengal was visited by famine in 1575. As usual, famines were followed by epidemics, causing a fearful destruction of human life.

We learn from Abul Fazl that it was Akbar's policy to make arrangements for relieving the distress of the famine-stricken people. We know definitely that in 1595 he appointed Sheikh Farid as a special officer to supervise relief measures. Free kitchens were started and ration to all was distributed free of cost. We have no further material to form a concrete picture of the details of the relief work undertaken by Akbar's government. But land-revenue was invariably remitted in times of draught and scarcity.

Games and Sports

Akbar had inherited from his ancestors a love of hunting which had become his regular pastime. His nobles and courtiers followed his example. Hawking was another hobby of Akbar. The game of polo was a favourite game of our upper class people during the 16th century. Animal combats were arranged periodically by the court, and people gathered to witness the fight of elephants, tigers and wild boars. Wrestling and pigeon-flying were quite common, and so was boxing. Abul Fazl gives a list of famous athletes of Akbar's times and states that two well-matched wrestlers used to contend every day before the Emperor, who rewarded them after the match. Akbar learnt pigeon-flying from one of his tutors and continued to take interest in this pastime until his old age. Pigeon-flying remained popular throughout the Mughal period and it is so even now in some important cities like Agra and Lucknow. Kite flying was as popular as it is today.

Indoor games were favourites of our upper class people during the age of Akbar. The Emperor himself exhibited keenness at chess or *shatranj* which seem to have come down to us from ancient days in our country. From India, it spread to Arabia, Persia and China. This game was considered lawful even by orthodox Muslims and hence was equally

common in well-to-do Hindu and Muslim homes. Another indoor game, which was as popular as chess, was *chaupar* or backgammon. Next in popularity was the game of *phansa*, and the fourth was *pachisi*, which was played with *cowries*. These games, namely, *chaupar*, *phansa* and *pachisi*, were played on a cloth board in the form of a cross, each of four arms of the cross being divided into twenty-four squares in three rows of eight each. The squares were indicated by patches of coloured cloth. Akbar was particularly fond of *chandal-mandal* and *pachisi*. The figures of these games can even now be seen in the Agra Fort. Playing cards were also common. In the rural areas boys and men played *kabaddi*, an outdoor game, and *surbagghi*, which was an indoor game resembling chess.

Fairs and Festivals

Our people of the medieval age took great delight in entertainments, amusements, fairs and festivals. Akbar's court was a centre of national festivals, such as Rakshabandhan, Dasehra, Dewali and Vasant. These Hindu festivals had been adopted by the Mughal court and were celebrated with great display. The Persian festival of Nauroz was also celebrated by the court under Akbar for a week or more every year. The birthdays of the Emperor and crown princes, the anniversaries of the Emperor's accession according to solar and lunar calculations were observed on such a grand scale as to give the impression of a festival. Hindus were very fond of going on pilgrimage to their holy places, which were found in all parts of the country. The sacred places where periodical fairs were held and which were thronged by thousands of people, were Hardwar, Thaneshwar, Mathura, Ayodhya, Prayag, Gaya, Ujjain, Puri, Conjeevaram and Rameshwaram. Akbar had abolished the "pilgrims' tax" on the Hindus as early as 1563 which must have given great impetus to Hindu pilgrimage. Muslims under-

took pilgrimage to Ajmer, Ajodhan, Sikri, Nagaur and Mecca. The State afforded them every facility. A large number of Indian-built ships were kept on the West Coast for carrying pilgrims to the Red Sea. In 1575, Akbar issued a general order that whoever wished to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, might charge his expenses to the public treasury. A large number of Muslims availed themselves of this offer. Akbar maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese who had established their supremacy on the Sea. The Portuguese sometimes charged not only licence fee for the ships but also compelled the pilgrims to pay them huge bribes.

Some of the common recreations were shows and performances, such as *kathputli*, juggler's performances, monkey-dances, acrobat's antics and *Ramlila*. Marriages and other *sanskars* also afforded recreation and amusement to the common people. Nautch and music were very common in all parts of the country.

Intemperance was a common evil from which the upper classes of our society suffered during the medieval age. Akbar, like his ancestors, used to drink, but perhaps sparingly. He seems to have liked *tadi* or country-made liquor and not European wine. All his sons were confirmed drunkards. Two of them died of excessive drinking and the third one, Jahangir, escaped his brothers' fate on account of his robust constitution. In spite of the Quranic prohibition, Muslim courtiers were generally addicted to liquor. Rajputs, too, were fond of wine and opium. Some of the other castes in royal employment seemed to have familiarity with wine, but our common people were free from this evil. Both on account of tradition and religious considerations, the masses were temperate and abstemious.

Literature and Art

Persian Literature—The reign of Akbar was a

period of renaissance in Medieval Indian history. His tolerant and benevolent policy and his patronage of learning, coupled with internal peace and prosperity and freedom from foreign danger, made possible the conditions in which letters and art flourish. It is no surprise, therefore, that volumes of literature were produced by scholars of outstanding ability. Persian literature may be classified under two heads, namely, original composition and translations. Under the first category letters and poetry occupied a prominent place. It was a fashion with writers in that age to leave behind collections of letters which were considered models of literary style. Abul Fazl's letters known as *Insha-i-Abul Fazl* have been printed by the Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow. They were regarded as models of epistolary composition and were imitated by scholars throughout the Mughal period. Even the puritan Emperor, Aurangzeb, who condemned Abul Fazl as a heretic, commended the latter's style to his sons. Many other collections from the pen of other distinguished essayists have come down to us and some of them are likely to yield material for a cultural history of the period. Persian poetry occupied the next place. In fact, poetry was, in medieval age, the most popular vehicle of literary expression and Muslims, both Indian and foreign, were particularly fond of it. It served the Persians and the Mughals as an easy vehicle to give expression to their natural love of beauty. There were many in Akbar's days who practised it as a regular profession, while others resorted to it as a means of relaxation, or pursuit of culture. Owing to the patronage extended to poetry, hundreds of poets, both Indian and foreigners, flocked to Akbar's court. Abul Fazl tells us that "Many among them have completed a *diwan* or have written a *masnavi*." The *Ain-i-Akbari* gives the name of fifty-nine topmost Persian poets who had been presented to Akbar and patronised by him. There were fifteen others who, too, were supposed to be-

long to the first category, but had not been presented ; they had sent their poems to Akbar from various places in Persia. Abul Fazl gives extracts from the poetic compositions of the fifty-nine best poets of Persian. The most important of them was his own elder brother Abul Faiz Faizi. Critics considered Faizi to have been the most prominent Indian poet of Persian since the days of Amir Khusrau. He is supposed to rank with Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Dehlvi, and was, thus, one of the three Indian poets of Persian whose works were read outside India. Critics hold divergent views about the value of the verses composed by Faizi and other poets at the court of Akbar. According to the historian Smith, they had "no better claims to the title of poet than the composer of acrostics for a magazine has. They exercised their perverse ingenuity in torturing words into all sorts of shapes, omitting words with dotted letters, constructing cunningly devised chronograms and such like trivialities. Exercises of the kind, whatever their technical merits may be, certainly are not poetry." (*Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 416). Indian scholars, however, are appreciative of the literary productions of the age. Although one cannot entirely subscribe to the views held by Smith, there is no doubt that the poets of the period writing in Persian paid more attention to language than to thought, and their familiar theme in most cases was love.

Many an author of outstanding merit produced a commentary on the *Quran*. Some of these commentaries possess independent literary value. The most important achievement of the age was translation into Persian of first-rate works of Sanskrit, Arabic, Turki and Greek. As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, Akbar in order to bring about a fusion of the Hindu and Muslim cultures and in order to provide a common literature to the intelligentsia of the land, established at his court a Trans-

lation Department in which were employed high ranking scholars of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. The department functioned under his personal supervision. Under its auspices a part of *Zich-i-Jadid-e-Mirzai* was translated into Persian by Amir Fateh-ulla Shirazi. The *Tajak*, a well-known work of astronomy, and the *Tujuk-i-Baburi* or the memoirs of Babur, were translated into Persian. The latter work was translated by Mirza Abdul Rahim Khan Khanan. The *Majmul-Buldan*, an excellent work on towns and countries, was translated from Arabic into Persian by Mullah Ahmad, Qasim Beg, Sheikh Munavvar and others. Abul Fazl translated into Persian many outstanding Sanskrit works, such as *Kishan Joshi*, the *Ganga Dhar*, the *Mahesh*, the *Mahanand* and others. The *Mahabharata* was rendered into Persian by Naqib Khan, Abdul Qadir Badayuni and Shaikh Sultan of Thaneshwar and was named *Razm-nama*, the book of wars. The same scholars also translated the *Ramayana*, and Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi translated *Atharva Veda*. The *Lilawati*, a Sanskrit treatise on mathematics, was rendered into Persian by Faizi, and *Rajatarangini*, a Sanskrit history of Kashmir, was translated by Mulla Shah Muhammad of Shahabad. The *Harivansh Purana* was translated by Maulana Sheri and Abul Fazl himself translated the *Panch Tantra* (*Anwar-i-Sahili*) and Faizi the story of *Nal Damayanti* into Persian. (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 104-106).

Among original compositions in Persian, historical literature easily occupied the first place. Akbar's inordinate love of history and patronage of many became responsible for the production of many chronicles describing not only the events of the reign, but also the past history of the country. Among the notable works, may be mentioned Abul Fazl's *Akbar-Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad's *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun-Nama* and Jauhar's *Tazkirat-ul-Waqiyat*.

Abbas Sarwani produced the *Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi* alias *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*. Akbar ordered the compilation of the history of 1,000 years of Islam, and Naqib Khan, Mullah Muhammad of Thatta and Jafar Beg were commissioned to write out the work. The book, with an introduction by Abul Fazl, was brought out in time and became known as the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*. Some of the other histories written during the period, were Abdul Qadir Badayuni's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Ahmed Yadgar's *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afaghana*, Bayazid Sultan's *Tarikh-i-Humayun*, Nurul-Haq's, *Zubdat-ul-Tawarikh*, and Asad Beg's *Waqiyat*, and *Akbar-Nama* of Sheikh Illahdad Faizi Sarhindi.

Hindi Poetry

The reign of Akbar was the golden age of Hindi poetry. The influence exercised by his glorious and victorious reign, his well-known preference of Hindu thought and mode of life, together with his policy of complete religious toleration and recognition of merit, combined with peace, both internal and external, engendered a bracing atmosphere for the development of thought and literature. The result was that many first-rate Hindi poets produced remarkable poetical works which have become classics. The most notable luminaries of Hindi were Tulsi Das, Sur Das, Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, Ras Khan and Birbal. By universal consent of critics the first place among the poets of the age, both Hindi and Persian, belongs to Tulsi Das who, however, was not known to Akbar personally. He spent most part of his life at Banaras, and produced twenty-five works of high standard, the most well-known among them being the heroic poem, *Ram Charita Manas*, popularly known as the *Ramayana*. The epic is divided into seven books, describing the life of Shri Ram Chandra, the king of Ayodhya, who is looked upon by the Hindus as an incarnation of God. Tulsi's next important work is *Vinaya Patrika*

which consists of hymns or songs of prayers. The historian Smith and Sir George Grierson (a first-rate authority on the subject) are of the opinion that the *Ramayana* is a masterpiece, and that Tulsi Das was a great genius. According to them, Tulsi Das's style varies with the subjects and his characters, each of whom has a well-defined personality, live and move with all the dignity of a heroic age. Sir George Grierson goes further and says that "Tulsi Das is the most important figure in the whole of Indian Literature," that he used similes drawn from nature herself and that his description is most natural. The next most important Hindi poet was Sur Das who was even more prolific a writer than Tulsi Das. He is particularly known as the author of *Sur Sagar* and of many songs. No other poet of Hindi, before or after him, had a greater knowledge of child psychology than Sur Das. Some critics looked upon him as even greater than Tulsi Das. He was attached to Akbar's court and was popularly known as the "blind bard of Agra". His father, Ram Das, was also a court-poet of Akbar.¹ Many other Hindi poets graced Akbar's court. His reign was also marked by the advent of Muslim poets in the field of Hindi literature and poetry. In fact, some Muslim poets interpreted Indian culture so successfully that if their names were to be omitted from their composition, it would be indistinguishable from that of the Hindu scholars and poets. In this respect, the name of Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan stands pre-eminent. Besides being a master of Persian, Arabic and Turki, he was also a first-rate scholar of Sanskrit and a poet of Hindi and Rajasthani. Several hundred verses from his pen have come down to us and are given an honoured place in our poetical selections. In fact, no history of Hindi poetry can be complete without reference to the contribution of that versatile genius. He was

¹ Some modern scholars of Hindi are of the opinion that this Sur Das was not the author of *Sur Sagar*.

a friend of Tulsi Das and had correspondence with him. Another Muslim poet of Hindi was Ras Khan, who was a devotee of Lord Krishna and an author of a large number of first-rate poems which depict Shri Krishna's life in the woods of Vrindaban. Many other courtiers of Akbar, such as Birbal, Man Singh, Todar Mal and others, were lovers of Hindi poetry. Akbar himself loved Hindi poetry and extended patronage to Hindi poets. He is even stated to have composed some verses in that language. It is not, therefore, surprising that Hindi poetry made a remarkable progress during his reign.

The most important feature of the age was that literary activities were not confined to the court and the nobles. It was essentially a movement of the people, and a large number of scholars and poets of Hindi were found in the country-side and patronised mainly by local landlords and well-to-do public. One has to turn to the pages of *Mishra Bandhu Vinod* and *Ram Chandra Shukla's Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* to appreciate the spirit of that age which was responsible for the golden period of Hindi poetry.

Painting

In spite of the Quranic prohibition, Akbar loved painting. He used to say that far from making a man irreligious, painting compels a painter to turn to God and seek his assistance to bestow individuality upon his work. Like Akbar, the Persian rulers of the Safawi dynasty were liberal patrons of art and in disregard of the Quranic prohibition, they introduced Chinese or Mongolian painting in Persia, and had Chinese master-artists brought to their land to teach the art to their countrymen. Early Muslim painters confined themselves to the painting of inanimate objects, like trees, mountains, rivers and so forth. The next step was to take to the drawing of birds and animals and then finally to human portraiture. The greatest exponents of this art in

Central Asia were Bihzad of Herat and his pupil, Agha Miraq of Tabriz. Bihzad had served Sultan Husain Baiqara and subsequently entered the service of Shah Ismail of Persia. He became responsible for refining the Chinese or Mongolian style of painting and making it essentially Persian. It was this art that was brought into India by Akbar's orders and introduced into his court. It mingled with the style of Indian painting which had come down from ancient times despite neglect and want of patronage. The tradition of Hindu painting went far back into antiquity and came down to the 16th century through its noble representatives in the caves of Ajanta. Referring to the perfection acquired by the painters of Akbar's court, Abul Fazl writes, "This is specially true of the Hindus. Their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them." (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Volume I, p. 107). The two styles, Persian and Indian, at Akbar's court began gradually to fuse and in course of time became one. The foreign characteristics of the art gradually dropped out and, eventually, it became purely Indian. The process of this evolution can be seen in the unique copy of the *Badshahnama* both of which are preserved in the Oriental Khuda Bakhsh Public Library at Patna. Akbar's patronage attracted the best painters to his court. The ablest and most numerous among them were Hindu painters. They were employed to paint the walls of Akbar's capital at Fatehpur Sikri and also to produce albums. Of the seventeen master-painters of Akbar's court no less than thirteen were Hindus who were experts in portrait painting. The most important among these were Daswanth, Basawan, Kesu, Lal, Mukand, Madhu, Jagan, Mahesh, Tara, Khem Karan, Sanwla, Haribansh and Ram. Daswanth was the son of a *kahar* and was a *palki*-bearer. He was fond of painting pictures on the walls and one day Akbar chanced to see him

and his art and he at once employed him as a painter and patronised his work. But when Daswanth reached the height to his fame, he became insane and committed suicide. Basawan was considered by some critics as a greater painter than even Daswanth. He excelled in the painting of background and the drawing of features, distribution of colours and portraiture painting. Most of the Hindu painters, mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, belonged to the *Kayastha*, *Chitera*, *Silawat* and *Khati* castes. Some of them were commissioned to illustrate the *Razm-nama*, the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*.

Akbar created a separate department of painting and Khwaja Abdus Samad, one of the best painters of his court, was placed as its head. Abdus Samad was a Persian who had come from Shiraz. He was given the title of *Shirin-Qalam* or 'sweet pen'. The Emperor personally supervised the department and gave it every possible encouragement. The pieces executed by the court-painters were placed before him every week and he rewarded those whose paintings were found excellent. Not only were special grants made to the masters whose paintings were approved by the Emperor, but increments in their salaries were also sanctioned forthwith. The artists were enrolled as royal servants and granted *mansabs* in the imperial service. They drew their salaries according to their ranks. Abdus Samad, the head of the department, was a *mansabdar* of four hundred, but enjoyed much greater influence at the imperial court than his rank entitled him to.

Akbar's interest and patronage led to the establishment of a school of painting which may be called the National Indian School of Painting. Its members were drawn from all parts of India and even from outside. They belonged to various castes and religions. But they were inspired by one common ideal, namely, the production of works of a high quality, which would meet with the approval of the Emperor who was a great connoisseur of the art.

Calligraphy

Associated with the art of painting was the art of calligraphy which was highly prized in India, Persia and China. It was looked upon as a fine art and loved and encouraged by most of the Mughal Emperors. Although Akbar was not a lettered man, he had a taste for calligraphy and employed many men skilled in penmanship. They were commissioned with the work of producing beautiful copies of books for his library. Calligraphic writing was collected and preserved in albums like pictorial art. Abul Fazl tells us that eight modes of calligraphy were in vogue at Akbar's court, of which the eighth kind, named Nastaliq, was specially favoured by Akbar. It consisted entirely of curved lines. The most important calligraphist at Akbar's court was Muhammad Husain Kashmiri who was given the title of *Zarin Qalam*. Some of the other famous calligraphists at the court were Maulana Baquir and Muhammad Amin of Mashad, Mir Husain Kalanki and others.

Closely connected with calligraphy were the arts of artistic binding of books and illuminating them with lovely pictorial designs. Men employed for binding and illuminating the margins and covers of books or illustrating their themes were as artists. They were highly valued as painters properly so-called. Many dozens of the books produced in that age, enriched by valuable bindings and adorned by costly illustrations, have come down to us and are preserved in various manuscript libraries in the country. They reveal the high standard to which these twin arts had reached under Akbar and his successors.

Music

Like Babur, Akbar was devoted to music. "His Majesty," writes Abul Fazl, "pays much attention to music and is the patron of all who practise this

enchancing art." The *Ain-i-Akbari* gives the names of thirty-six first-rate musicians at his court. They were arranged in seven divisions. Each division was required to entertain the Emperor for one fixed day in the week. The Emperor himself was a skilled musician and no mean performer on the *Naqqara* (cattle drum). He had studied Hindu vocalisation under Lal Kalawant who taught him "every breathing and sound that appertains to the Hindi language." Early in his reign the Emperor had sent for Tansen from Rewa, and raised him to a position of great importance at his court. Tansen was the most notable musician of the age and, according to Abul Fazl, "a singer like him had not been in India for the last thousand years." He had been trained in a school established at Gwalior by Raja Man Singh Tomar (1486-1518). Tansen is said to have invented some new *ragas*. He is even credited with the power of stopping the flow of the Yamuna with his music. Another famous musician was Baba Ram Das, who ranked next only to Tansen. He seems to have been attached to Bairam Khan, who was so pleased with him on one occasion that he conferred upon him a reward of one lakh of *tankas*. Another equally famous singer was Baiju Bawra (sometimes called Briju Bawra), and, though not mentioned in Abul Fazl's list, he was certainly a contemporary of Tansen and Akbar. The guide at Fatehpur Sikri points out his house outside the royal palace and legend and folk-tale have preserved the memory of his rivalry with Tansen. Sur Das, son of the celebrated singer Ram Das and one of the greatest Hindi poets of all times, was also a musician of Akbar's court. The Emperor's interest in and patronage of music led to great progress in the instrumental as well as the vocal art. At his court Hindu and Muslim music mingled together and became one. To Akbar, therefore, belongs the credit of bringing about a fusion of two diverse systems of music and giving birth to the national Indian music.

Architecture

The Turko-Afghan invaders had brought to this land the ancient vaulted architecture of Mesopotamia, which, before its advent to our country, was greatly modified under the Sassanids and the Abbasid Khalifas and was miscalled by the general name of Islamic architecture. This foreign architecture, when introduced into India, was greatly influenced by the indigenous art which had held the field and reached remarkable level of excellence. The reasons for this were two-fold, namely, (1) the employment by the Sultans of Hindu masons and architects who unconsciously introduced in the Muslim buildings their own ideas of art and (2) the fact that early Muslim buildings were constructed out of the materials of Hindu temples and places which the conquerors had destroyed. In spite of the above circumstances, the buildings erected by the Sultans of Delhi and by those of the independent local dynasties that came into existence as a result of the decline of the Sultanate, were mainly foreign in design and workmanship. It was reserved for Akbar to make a conscious effort to amalgamate two styles and lay the foundation of the national Indian architecture. He had his own conception of architecture and planned many buildings, such as palaces, mosques, tombs and forts. He established a Public Works Department and his plans were carried out by his able architects and engineers. "His Majesty," writes Abul Fazl, "plans splendid edifices and dresses the work of his mind and heart in the garment of stone and clay." (Ain 85 on Buildings, vide *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 222). Akbar built three gigantic forts, namely, the Agra fort, the Lahore fort and the Allahabad fort. The Agra fort resembles that at Gwalior, which, as Percy Brown points out, must have furnished a model for Akbar's great edifice at Agra. Its circumference is nearly one and a half miles and it has two main gateways, namely, the Delhi Gate and the Amar Singh

Gate. Inside the fort, Akbar built about five hundred buildings of red sandstone. Most of these were pulled down by Shah Jahan, whose taste differed from that of his grandfather and who preferred white marble to red sandstone. Some of the buildings of Akbar, however, are still extant. The most important of these are the Akbari Mahal and the Jahangiri Mahal. These two palaces are built after the same pattern. The Jahangiri Mahal abounds in beautifully carved stone brackets which support the stone beams, wide eaves and flat ceilings. According to critics, it is so much Hindu in design that it can hardly be out of place at Chittor or Udaipur. The Lahore fort was constructed at almost the same time as the Agra fort. The buildings inside were similar to Jahangiri Mahal at Agra with only one difference that the decoration in Lahore fort is more vigorous and unrestrained than at Agra. Elephants and lions figure in the brackets and peacocks at the friezes from which it may be inferred that Hindu craftsmanship predominated and that the supervision of the Mughal overseers was of a very tolerant character. The Allahabad fort was built at a later date and many of its buildings, including its inner wall, have disappeared. The *Zanana* palace, which is still intact, shows that one of the special features of the buildings in this fort was "the number of distribution of its pillars with their superstructures. The greatest architectural achievement of Akbar, however, was his new capital at Fatehpur Sikri. On a ridge, two miles long and one mile broad, Akbar built a remarkable city, three sides of which were surrounded by a wall and the fourth side by an artificial lake. The walls had nine gates. The principal entrance was the Agra Gate which lay opposite to that city. The most important buildings inside the enclosure are the Record Office, Diwan-i-Khas and Diwan-i-Am, the Treasury, the Panch Mahal, Mariam's palace, the Turkish Sultana's palace, the Emperor's sleeping chambers and Library, Jodha Bai's palace and Birbal's palace. Outside the enclosure,

stands the Jami Mosque with its lofty portal known as the Buland Darwaza. Inside the enclosure of the mosque lies the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti which is built of white marble. Most of these buildings reveal a mixed style, which is partly Muslim and mainly Hindu in character. The decorative features in some of them are copies of those in the Hindu and Jain temples. The critics consider Diwan-i-Khas to be one of the most remarkable buildings. The Buland Darwaza, which is built of marble and sandstone, is "one of the most perfect architectural achievements in the whole of India." Fatehpur Sikri took about eleven years to complete (1569-1580) and, though it is a deserted place, "it still forms a most impressive revelation of a mighty personality." According to Fergusson, it is a reflex of the great man who built it. Akbar built several other notable buildings, such as the fort at Attock, a mosque at Amber and one at Merta, some at other places, and his mausoleum at Sikandra, which was designed by him but modified and completed by his son, Jahangir.

Abul Fazl tells us that Akbar built many *sarais* and excavated many tanks and wells for the benefit of the people. He also erected many schools and places of worship. "Everywhere also," writes he, "*sarais* have been built which are the comfort of travellers and the asylum of poor strangers." "Many tanks and wells are being dug for the benefit of the men and improvement of the soil. Schools and places of worship are being founded and triumphal arch of India is annually erected." (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 224).

The new style of architecture representing the combination of the best features of the indigenous and foreign styles, which may be called by the name of Mughal architecture, produced a profound effect on buildings all over the country, including those of the Rajput rulers of Rajasthan. The palaces built during the reign of Akbar at Amber, Bikaner, Jodh-

pur, Orchha and Datia indicate unmistakable Mughal influence. "It is not difficult," writes Percy Brown, "to see in such buildings how the stone structures of the early Mughals by the addition of engrailed arches, glass mosaics, planted plaster, guided gesso, and sgraffito were adapted to the more colourful requirements of the Hindu princes." (*Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, p. 548).

Not only civil buildings, but even the Hindu temples could not escape the nationalising effects of Akbar's architecture. While Akbar had freely borrowed from indigenous temple architecture, Hindu temples erected during his reign did not fail to borrow some of the features of the new eclectic style evolved at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Hindu temples at Vrindaban show clearly that certain of their features are borrowed from the contemporary style of the Mughals.

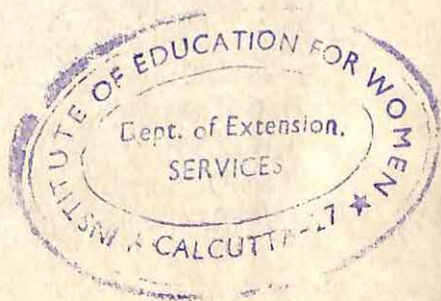
Decorative carving was an important feature of Mughal architecture. Carvings in Turkish Sultana's palace at Fatehpur Sikri and Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra include representations of plants, flowers, butterflies, sunsets, and the conventional vase designs. Perforated lattice work was equally highly prized. Mosaic and ebony decoration, in which our craftsmen of the Mughal age were proficient, was also lavishly used in the buildings of the time. Glazed tiles and decorative carvings form another special feature of the Mughal architecture. The Turkish Sultana's palace at Fatehpur Sikri is one of the finest specimens of glazed tile work.

Gardens

There existed gardens in India before the advent of the Mughals ; but they were not geometrically designed and erected pleasancess in all cases. Babur brought to our country the new style of gradens which had been developed in Persia and Turkistan and whose chief characteristic was "artificial irrigation in the form of channels, basins or tanks, and

dwarf waterfalls, so built that the water brimmed to the level of the paths on either side ; and the plan involved a series of terraces on sloping ground, usually numbering eight to correspond with the eight divisions of Quranic paradise : but sometimes seven to symbolise the seven planets." The main pavilion was often built on the topmost terrace and sometimes on the lowest terrace, in order to enable the occupant to have an uninterrupted view of the fountain and waterfalls. Akbar laid out gardens in his palaces ; but the most important garden associated with his name is that at Sikandra. In the centre of this garden stands his beautiful mausoleum. The plan of this garden is a four-fold plot (*charbagh*) surrounded by a huge enclosure with four gates in the middle of each of the four walls. The mausoleum, which stands in the centre, is flanked by tanks with central fountains. There are symmetrical channels of water. The channels and water-courses are paved with fine ceramic ware and are lined with cypress and wild pine trees, palm trees and other beautiful plants.

Akbar laid out fruit gardens also, and he was fond of horticulture. "His majesty," writes Abul Fazl, "looks upon fruits as one of the greatest gifts of the Creator, and pays much attention to them. The horticulturists of Iran and Turan have, therefore, settled here and the cultivation of trees is in a flourishing state." (*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 64).



sun. His eyelids were heavy as are those of Sarmatians, the Chinese, the Nipponians, and nearly all Asiatics of the more northern regions. His eyebrows were narrow, and his nose was of the middle size and drooping, but had a high bridge. His nostrils were expanded as though he were enraged and, on the left one, he had a wart, which met the upper-lip. He shaved his beard, but not his moustache, following the custom of young Turks before they assume the full costume of manhood. Unlike his forefathers, he did not shave his head, nor did he wear a cap, but bound his hair with a turban, which, they say, he did in imitation of the Indian custom in order to conciliate them. He dragged his left leg slightly, as though he were lame in it, though he had not been injured in the foot. He has in his body, which is very well-made, and neither thin and meagre nor fat and gross, much courage and strength. When he laughs he is distorted, but when he is tranquil and serene he has a noble mien and great dignity. In his wrath he is majestic." (Father Monserrates' *Commentaries*, pp. 196-197, also quoted in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, p. 155).

Akbar had a very attractive personality and his manners were charming. He was so valorous that he could cut off a lion's neck with one stroke of his sword. Whenever he liked, he could easily disregard all inclemencies of climate and weather and endure any kind of fatigue and privations. He was accustomed to hard work and would often walk miles together. He was frank, attentive and witty in conversation. He always found time gladly to hear their cases and to respond graciously to their requests. Their little offerings, too, he used to accept with such a pleased look, handling them and putting them on his bosom, as he did not do with the most lavish gifts of the nobles, which with discrete pretence he often seemed not even to glance at."

Akbar was gifted with an imposing appearance and looked 'every inch a king'. Contemporary writers are unanimous in maintaining that he was possessed of an uncommon dignity and that no one could fail to be impressed with his extraordinary presence. Jahangir gives the following pen-picture of his father: "He was of the hue of wheat; his eyes and eyebrows were black and his complexion rather dark than fair; he was lion-bodied, with a broad chest, and his hands and arms long. On the left side of his nose he had a fleshy mole, very agreeable in appearance, of the size of half a pea. Those skilled in the science of physiology considered this mole a sign of great prosperity and exceeding good fortune. His august voice was very loud, and in speaking and explaining had a peculiar richness. In his actions and movements, he was not like the people of the world, and the glory of God manifested itself in him." (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, pp. 33-34).

Another eye witness, Father Monserrate, who had the privilege of close association with Akbar, writes, "He was in face and stature fit for the dignity of King, so that anybody, even at the first glance, would easily recognise him as the king. His shoulders were broad, and his legs slightly bandy and adapted to riding. His complexion was fair, but slightly suffused with a darker tint. He carried his head slightly inclined to one side, towards the right shoulder; his brow was broad and open and his eyes sparkled as does the sea when lighted by

PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

CHAPTER VII

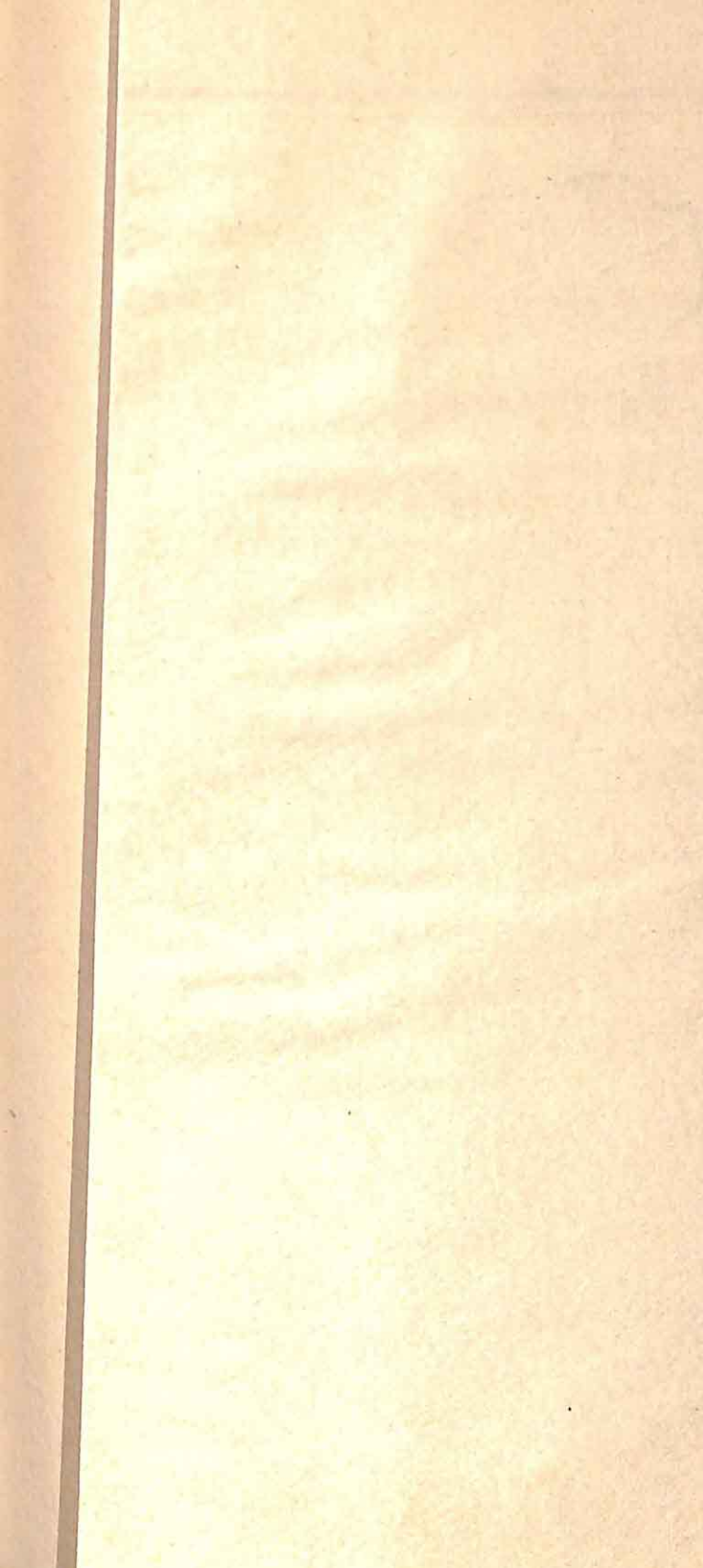
(Du Jarric, III, quoted in Smith's *Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 335).

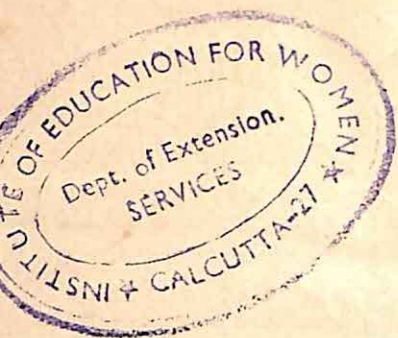
As a gentleman, Akbar left little to be desired. He was a dutiful son, an indulgent brother and father and a loving husband. He was faithful to his friends and did everything to advance their interest. On the death of his intimate friend, Abul Fazl, he wept bitterly and refused to touch food for two days. Although polygamous like other princes, he was thoroughly devoted to his wives. He had faith in human nature and considered it his duty to protect the poor and the helpless.

Akbar used to wear a surcoat or tunic which came down to his knees. It was made of silk and interwoven with gold thread, decorated with embroidered patterns of flowers and foliage and fastened by a large clasp. His turban was so rolled up as to combine Hindu and Muslim style. It was decorated with costly pearls and other gems. His trousers came down to his heels and were fastened by knots of pearls. As was the fashion of the time, he had always a dagger in his girdle.

Extremely moderate in his diet, Akbar did not touch meat for more than nine months in the year. In his early days, however, he used to eat meat every day. Even then he was not fond of it. In his later years, he gave up meat diet almost altogether. Akbar's habit was to take one substantial meal a day; but his menu consisted of a large number of dishes. He drank wine whenever he liked, though very sparingly indeed. But he was fond of fruit which he looked upon as a gift from Nature. A large variety was produced in the country under his direction and patronage.

Unlike his ancestors and descendants, Akbar was illiterate. He had been a truant child and did not sit down to learn his lessons. There has, in recent years, been a controversy regarding Akbar's illiteracy and some scholars have held that he was not





altogether unlettered. But the evidence to the contrary is so overwhelming that one cannot but look upon this theory as nothing more than special pleading. Besides the testimony of the Jesuit missionaries, Monserrate and Jerome Xavier (vide *J.R.A.S.*, 1912 p. 194 and of 1888, p. 37), we have the weighty remark of Jahangir that, although his father was illiterate, yet he was so intimately acquainted with various branches of knowledge and so expert in expounding it that no one could imagine that he was an illiterate man. (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* by Rogers and Beveridge, Vol. I, p. 33). Abul Fazl writes, "His holy heart and his sacred soul never turned towards external teaching and his possession of the most excellent sciences together with his disinclination for the learning of letters was a method of showing to mankindthat the *lofty comprehension of the Lord of the age was not learnt and acquired, but was the gift of God in which human effort had no part.*" (*Akbarnama*, Vol. I, p. 589). In spite of these obvious handicaps, Akbar was not an ignorant man in any sense of the term. He had acquired a great deal of knowledge of theology, literature, poetry, philosophy, history and some other sciences, by contact with learned men of all branches of knowledge and by having books read out to him every day. His memory was so marvellous that he remembered accurately the contents of books read out to him as also the minute details of administrative business. He possessed clarity of thought and fluency in expression. He was fond of discoursing on difficult subjects of philosophy and religion with the great scholars of the age so eloquently that no one could even imagine that he was illiterate.

Akbar was deeply religious. Sometimes, he was assailed by doubt, to remove which he would spend days and nights in study, thought and discussion with learned men. He made a comparative study of different religions, which enabled him to see the short-

comings of Islam. Though he lost faith in the religion of his boyhood and youth, yet he continued to be religious. He prayed four times, morning, noon, evening and midnight, spending considerable time over his prayers. Apart from these, his life was a continuous search for truth. He was fascinated by such metaphysical subjects as the enquiry regarding the relations between God and man, and his happy sayings show his supreme faith in the Almighty.

"There is no need," he would often say, "to discuss the point that a vacuum in nature is impossible. God is Omnipresent."

"There exists a bond between the Creator and the creature which is not expressible in language."

"Each person according to his condition gives the Supreme Being a Name, but in reality to name the Unknowable is vain."

But Akbar was not a perfect man as Abul Fazl would have us believe. Nor was his personal character altogether above blame. Although the stories of his so-called anxious search for beautiful women in the weekly Mina Bazars held in the palace and the popular legend of his clash with the spirited wife of Prithvi Raj Rathor of Bikaner, who was alleged to have taken out her dagger to defend her honour, are later inventions of the fertile bardic imagination and have no foundation in fact and although the Emperor was not a licentious profligate in thought or in deed, he did allow himself latitude, at least in his early years, in the matter of wives, and his harem contained 5,000 women. Making due allowance for the presence of female relatives and servants, the number of his queens must have been considerable. In this respect, Akbar did not rise above the standard of the age. He was not a teetotaller, and was also familiar with duplicity. At times, he lost temper, became subject to violent paroxysms of rage, and inflicted unduly harsh punishments. But such lapses were rare and lasted only

for a short time. It must be said in fairness to him that he knew the value of moderation and never became a slave to passion or a prey to any kind of weakness.

A great soldier and general, Akbar was possessed of extraordinary courage and bodily strength. His uncommon power of endurance enabled him to defy the inclemency of weather and other physical hardships to which most men succumb. Gifted with originality, organising ability of a high order, and a magnetic personality, he could easily enforce discipline among his troops and lead them on to success. His was, therefore, a career of unbroken victories. His motto was : "A monarch should always be intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him. The army should always be exercised in warfare, lest from want of training they become self-indulgent." He thus believed in a policy of aggressive conquest. His army was almost perfect in organisation, and he had made use of a system of warfare that was well-suited to the genius of our people and to the age in which he lived.

As has been shown elsewhere in this book, Akbar made a radical change in the theory of kingship. He was the first ruler in Medieval India to discard the Islamic basis of sovereignty and to lay down the principle that the king was the father of all his people irrespective of caste, race or religion. He thus revived the ancient Hindu ideal and made a conscious effort to bridge the gulf between the ruler and the ruled. He saw the vision of a united India and worked hard to translate it into a reality. He was not satisfied with mere political unity, but desired to strengthen it by cultural, social and economic unity and, if possible, also by religious uniformity. No monarch in that age was inspired by more lofty ideals.

As an administrator and a statesman, Akbar stands unrivalled. He was a constructive genius and

possessed the rare gift of combining the knowledge of broad original principles of administration with a mastery over minute details of various departments of government. He had the ability of introducing new administrative devices congenial to the genius of the people and suitable for the emergency. He had the courage to discard outworn and pernicious customs, no matter if these were sanctified by tradition, time or religion. His discarding of the Quranic theory of kingship and abolition of the hated taxes like the pilgrims' tax and the *jizya*, which had centuries of religious sanction behind them, are instances in point. Only a ruler of extraordinary ability and strength of character could have thought of disestablishing Islam as the religion of the State or granting a complete religious toleration and equality of status to all religions. In short, Akbar was a very wise and courageous ruler and statesman who transformed the very basis of his government to suit the circumstances of the age and the welfare of all his subjects.

He was truly a national king. Dr. R. P. Tripathi holds that his ideal of sovereignty was universal, not national. This view is based on the assumption that Akbar's desire was to conquer Central Asia, including Farghana, which formed the kingdom of his ancestors, and to annex it to his empire. It would have been impossible, he argues, to exercise sway over such a heterogeneous dominion, inhabited by diverse races, without subscribing to the ideal of universal kingship. What Akbar would have done or not done is only a matter of conjecture. We are not concerned with what might have been. The fact remains that he identified himself completely with India and her culture and did his very best to advance her political, social, economic and cultural interests as well as any one who might have belonged to the Indian race and to the religion of the vast majority of her population. He dreamt of a united India, and, by

diplomacy and conquest, brought the whole of Northern India and a part of the Dakhin under one government and one political system. He established in the whole of his empire, a uniform system of administration. The provinces of the empires of Chandragupta Maurya and Samudragupta were an ill-cemented mass held together only by the common bond of allegiance to the Emperor. So also were the provinces of the Sultanate of Delhi under Ala-ud-din Khilji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq and others. Akbar, on the other hand, gave all the provinces of his empire the same system of administration, the same set of officials, the same administrative methods, the same revenue system and the same coinage. The officers in the provinces bore the same titles and were members of the same imperial service, and the soldiers and officers were transferred from province to province. This gave the empire political and administrative unity of the highest kind possible in that age. Secondly, Akbar attempted to give his empire cultural unity by making Persian the court language and compulsory for all State servants and by providing in that language (either by translation or by original compositions) the best Hindu and Muslim thought, religious as well as secular. It has already been shown that the translation department at his capital rendered into Persian our ancient scriptures, including the *Vedas* and other valuable Sanskrit works on various sciences. Similarly, notable books of Arabic, Turki and even Greek were translated into Persian. All this was done to provide a common literature for the upper and middle classes of our population. Moreover, most of the fine arts, such as architecture painting and music, were nationalised and made the common property of the Hindus and Musalmans alike. Thirdly, Akbar sought to strengthen our society by doing away with some of its evils. He tried to abolish *sati*, child-marriage and old-age marriage. He exercised strict supervision over prostitutes and segregated them.

Similarly, he compelled butchers, hunters and washers of dead bodies to reside outside the town. He did not allow circumcision before the age of twelve, and allowed Muslim converts to go back to their original religion if they liked. Fourthly, he regulated trade and industry so as to give economic prosperity to the land. Many kinds of manufacturing industries were encouraged and the country became so prosperous as to dazzle the foreign travellers and ambassadors. Finally, Akbar attempted to bring about a synthesis of the various religions in his empire, with a view to doing away with narrow bigotry and religious separatism and strife. Although he did not succeed in this noble task, yet he won the gratitude of a vast majority of his subjects and earned the title of a national king.

Place in History

Akbar's idealism, natural gifts, force of character and concrete achievements entitle him to a high place among the rulers of mankind. His lofty patriotism and intellectual superiority alone easily raised him head and shoulders above all other kings of medieval India. But he was not a mere idealist or a visionary. He was first and foremost a realist who always faced facts and tried to place his feet upon the bed-rock of a situation instead of soaring high in the air. That was the reason why he had great positive achievements to his credit. This rare combination of idealism and realism entitled Akbar to the first place among the Muslim rulers of India and one of the first among the most important and successful monarchs, both Hindu and Muslim, this country had ever had. Akbar's age was the age of great rulers. His contemporaries were Elizabeth of England, Henry IV of France and Abbas the Great of Persia. He was unquestionably superior to them all in more respects than one. The historian Smith is right when he says, "He was a born king of men with a rightful claim to rank as one of the greatest sovereigns known to history."

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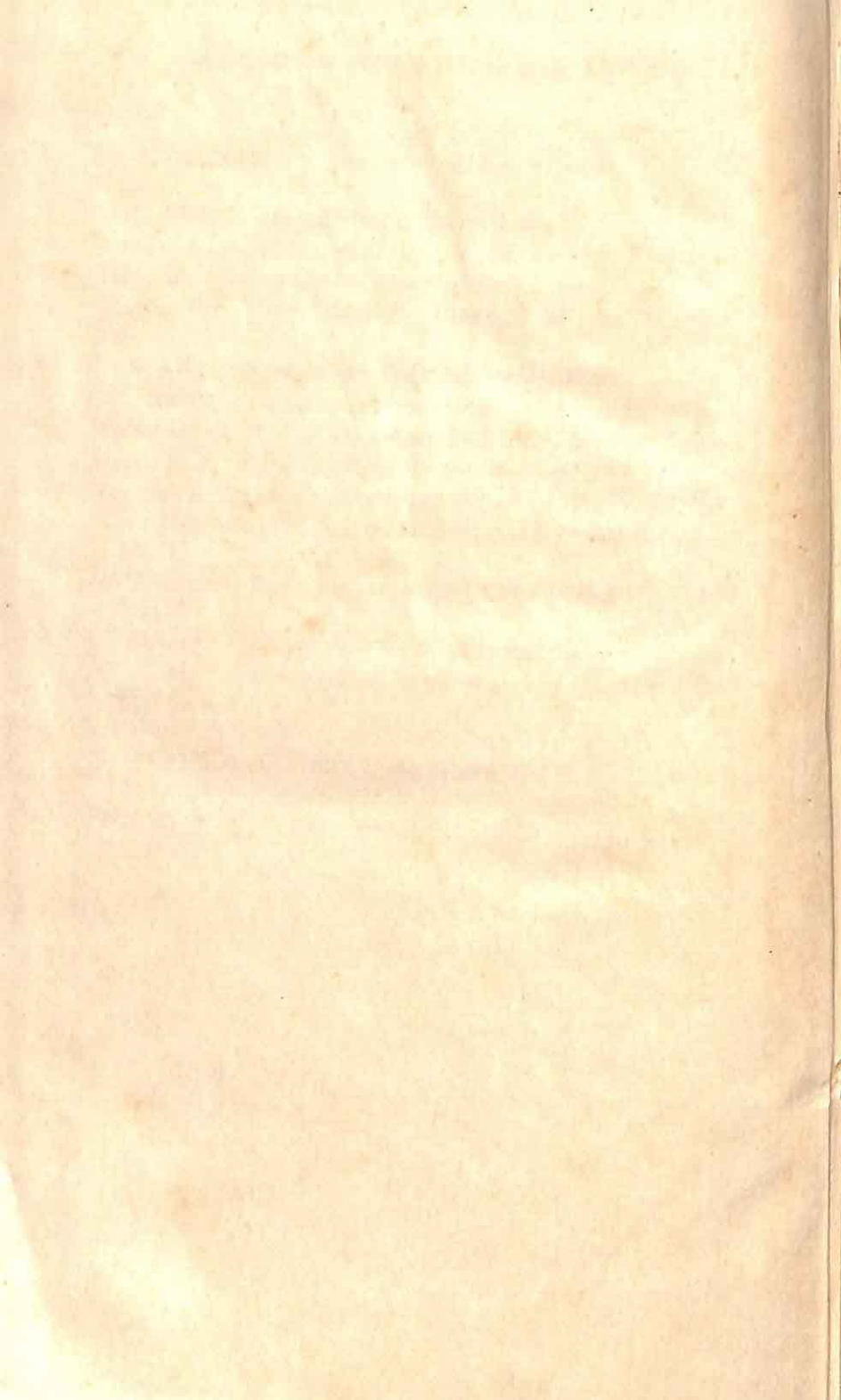
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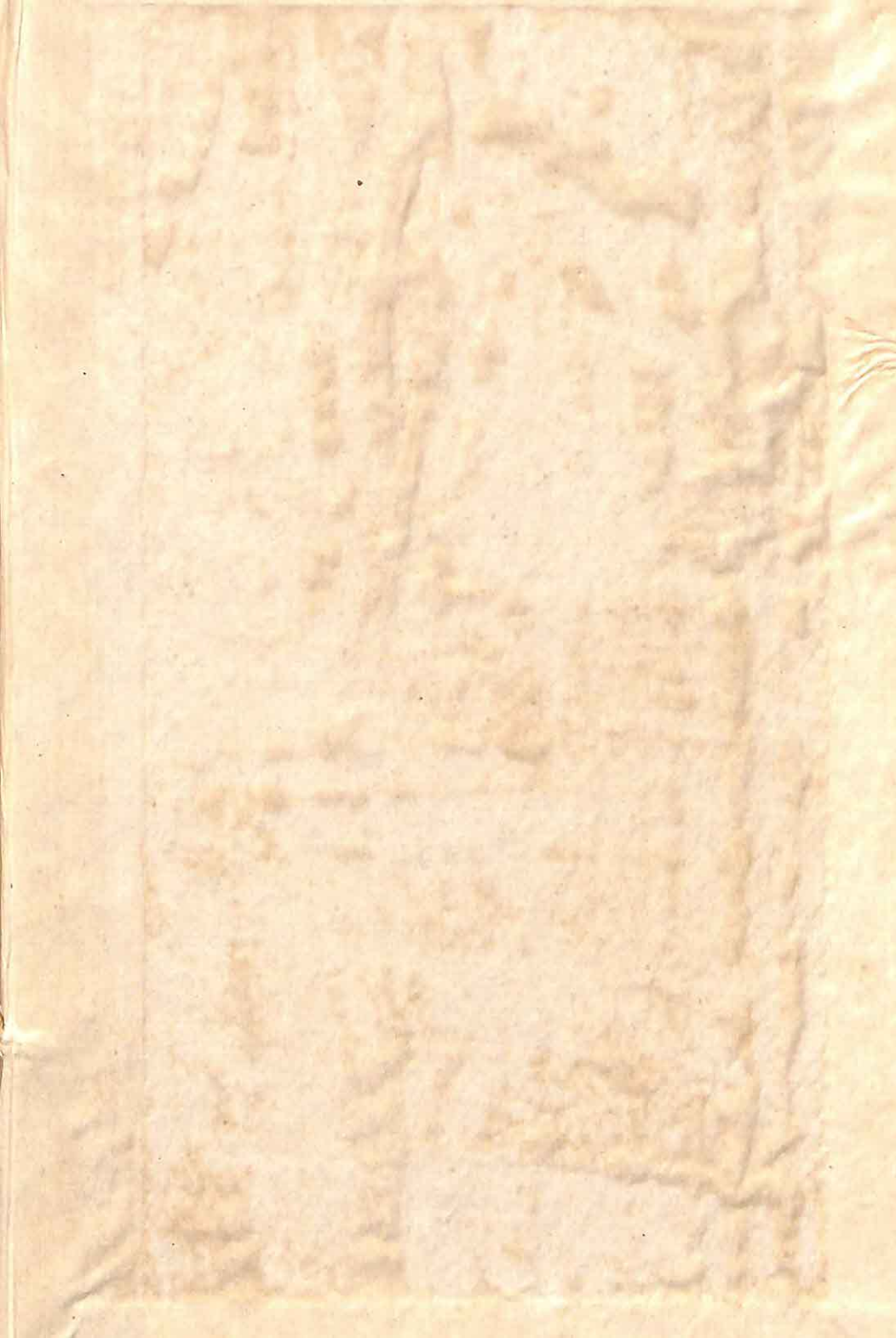
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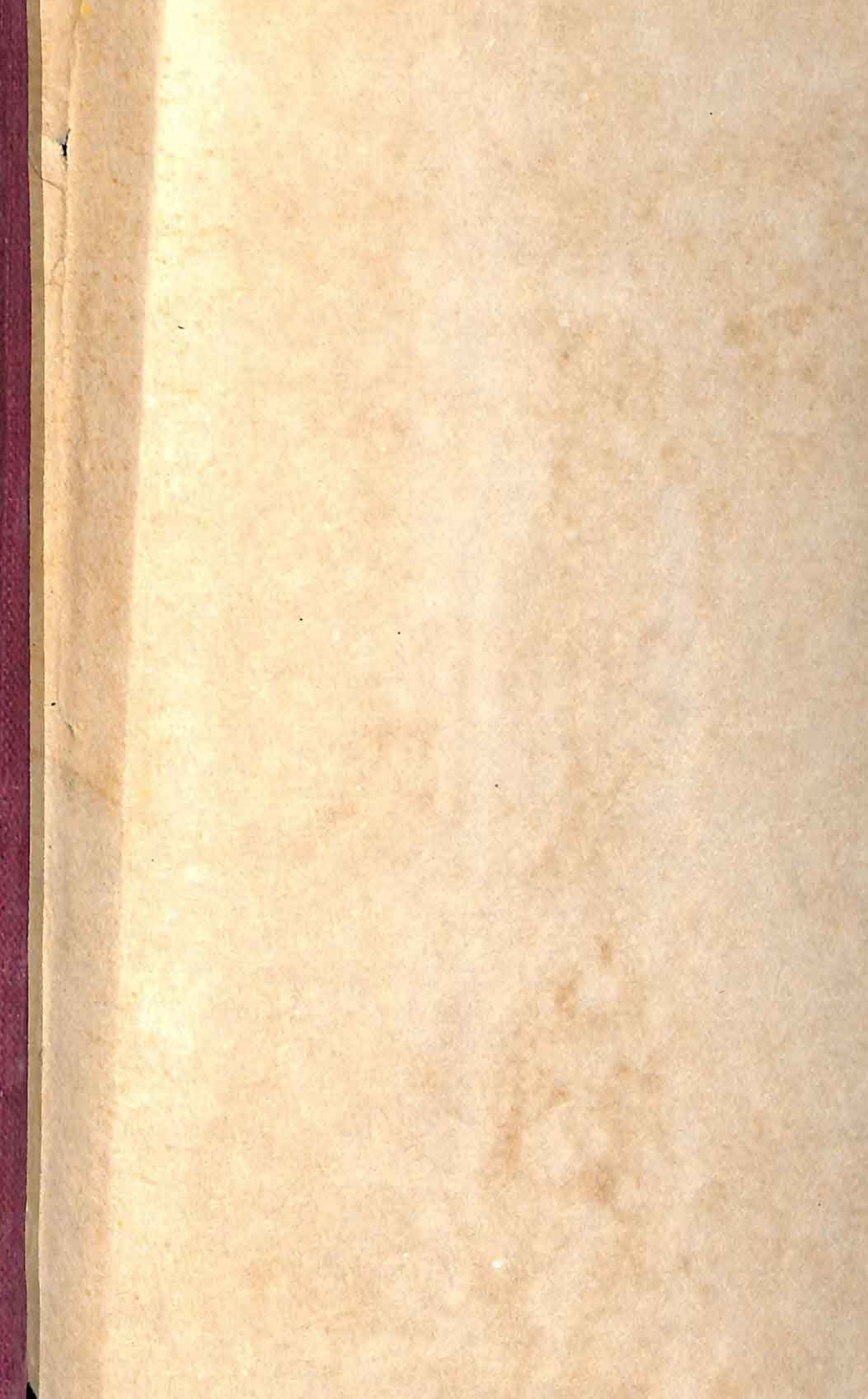
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